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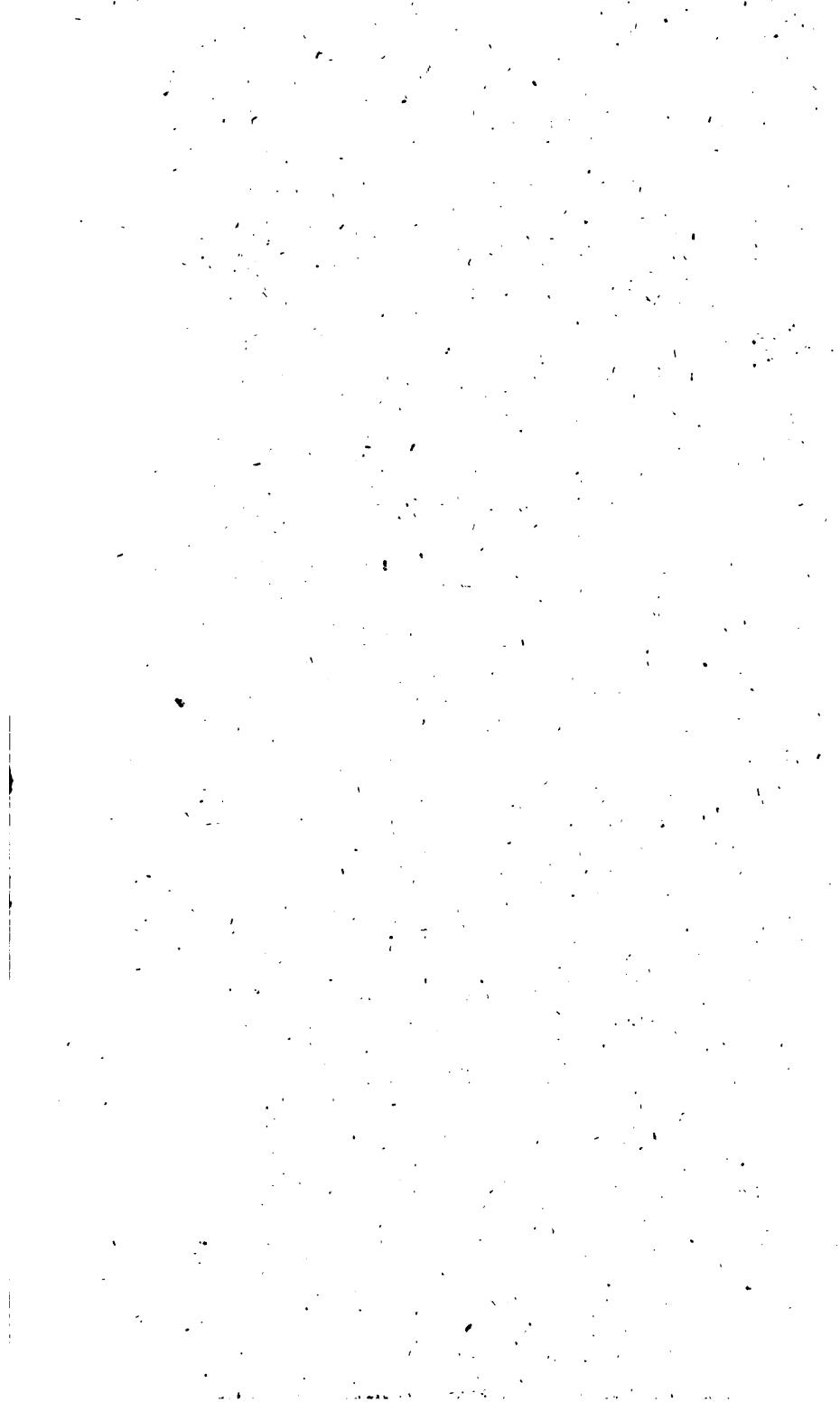
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Alphens Delch









# SOLITUDE

CONSIDERED

69125

WITH RESPECT TO ITS

DANGEROUS INFLUENCE

UPON

THE MIND AND HEART.

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED FROM

THE ORIGINAL GERMAN

*Johann Georg*  
~~M~~ ZIMMERMANN

BRING A SEQUEL TO THE FORMER ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

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AUDI ALTERAM PARTEM.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR C. DILLY, IN THE POULTRY.

1798.

THE END OF THE WORLD

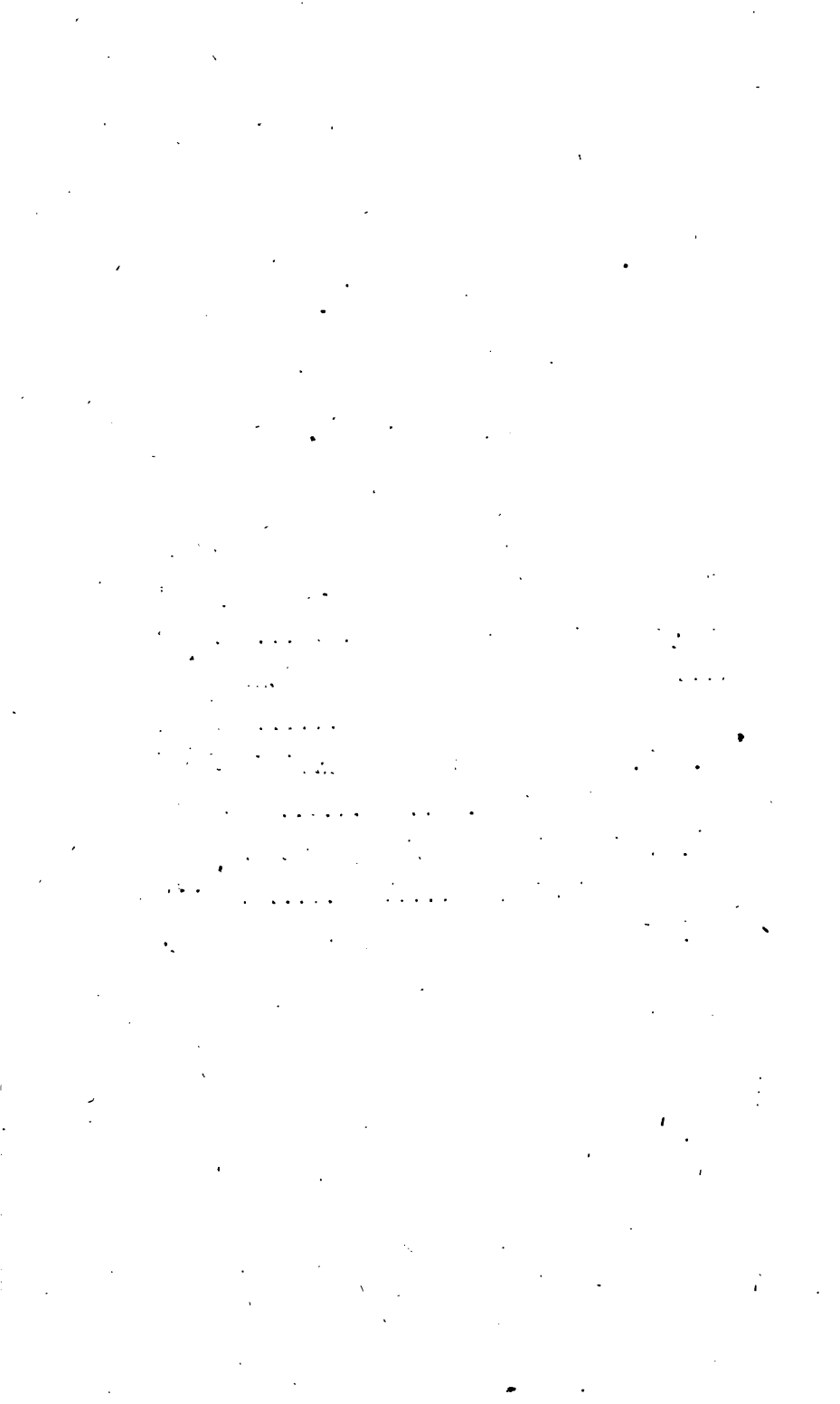
THE END OF THE WORLD

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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**ZIMMERMAN's** celebrated *Treatise on SOLITUDE* has long been known to the English Reader by the very elegant Translation made from the French of M. MERCIER: But, unfortunately for the fame of the German writer, his sentiments have thus been most materially perverted and misrepresented: Of Twelve Chapters contained in the original work, on the various consequences of solitary habits, the French version comprehended only Four; and those such as treated only of the salutary effects of Retirement. By this means instead of appearing in his true character as a philosophical reasoner on the subject of Retirement, ZIMMERMAN has been considered only as an amiable recluse, painting, with the lively but visionary colours of romantic attachment, a state of life, which incautiously embraced, or obstinately adhered to, renders its votary burthenfome to himself as well as useless to mankind.

How



*How contrary this was to the real character of this admired writer, it is hoped the present volume will manifest. He will here be seen in his true light, not only as a man abounding in a noble and delicate sensibility, and possess of a rich and elegant imagination; but as a rational moralist, a comprehensive and enlightened Philosopher, investigating the influence of Solitude in its different stages and various forms; balancing its benefits and mischiefs; proposing regulations, and suggesting remedies.*

*It is not meant to affix any censure on the plan of the excellent Translation of the Former Part of SOLITUDE. The Translator professedly derived his knowledge of the work solely from the French Version: and his adherence to that necessarily precluded him from displaying the general scope and purpose of his author. ZIMMERMAN was thus exhibited, not only as the blind zealot and romantic pannegyrist of Solitude, but was also rendered, as far as his writings have any efficacy, the seducer of mankind into a mode of life, which the amiable writer devoted the greater part of his work to prove, was*

*in certain cases highly pernicious to their morals and happiness.*

M. MERCIER excused the partial character of his Translation by alledging the bulk of the work; and the scruples of many of his countrymen, which, he intimates, might take alarm at the freedom, with which the nature and tendency of monastic seclusion were discussed by the German writer. This latter objection, it is presumed, can not apply to English readers; who, independent of the known liberality of their moral and religious opinions, entertain no prejudices that can interest them in the support of an extravagant and unnatural state of Solitude. The public attention, which has been excited by that part of the work, which has already appeared in English, seems to warrant the expectation that the volume now offered, if it has by any means done justice to the original, will be a subject of curiosity.—It has been the aim of the Translator, by omitting whatever was adapted only to German taste, or interesting only to German feelings, to obviate M. Mercier's most weighty objection: and so to reduce the dimensions of the work, that, while it embraced every thing important to the full development

lopement of the real sentiments and views of the Author, it might not become burthensome to the patience of the Reader. How far he has succeeded in his attempt the Public must determine.

There are a few passages in this Volume, with respect to the insertion of which the Publisher had no small hesitation: They have been admitted however, as affording to the curious Enquirer, the means of philosophical investigation into the History of the HUMAN MIND; and still more as a warning against the false and exaggerated pretences of the possible perfection of HUMAN NATURE: an attempt to attain which led men of the most virtuous hearts, though not perhaps of the soundest heads, into such Vagaries as awaken at once our pity and our indignation.

NOVEMBER, 1798.

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\* \* Of the English Translation of the Former Part of SOLITUDE from the French of MERCIER, above alluded to, *fix* impressions, which are the only Genuine Editions, have been printed for Mr. DILLY.—He is under the necessity of cautioning the Publick against an Imposition attempted upon them, by a mutilated Piracy of that work, published by certain persons styling themselves ASSOCIATED BOOKSELLERS.

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# SOCIETY.

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## CHAPTER THE FIRST.

### ON THE GENERAL INDUCEMENTS TO SOCIETY.

**I**T must be confessed, that it is not good for man to be alone; that a total solitude is foreign to his nature, and unfriendly to his happiness. Not only a multitude of wants, which cannot be supplied without the assistance of his brethren, but an innate bias, and constitutional propensity to communion, draw him from the recesses of solitude, and join him in the bonds of society. Of his necessities, association is indeed the most imperious and irresistible.

THE Deity, who framed and ordered our being, has sanctioned and commanded this impulse to social commerce, by impressing it on our nature, and rendering the desire of a companion the continual cry of our hearts. But the waywardness of our minds prevents the sacred movement; and, instead of fixing our happiness in a firm, close, and

select attachment to a few sensible and estimable friends, we seek it in a vague and scattered intercourse with a volatile and unfeeling world.

THE inclination to domestic intimacy and confidential union, is inherent in the constitution of our minds; in seeking them, we obey the counsels of reason, and the injunctions of nature: but we should distrust and resist the inducement to continual and indiscriminate intercourse. The one is an innocent and salutary indulgence, a natural and laudable tendency: the other is a factitious desire, an habitual craving, an unnatural passion; produced in the rankness of a distempered vanity, or raised in the fluctuation of an uninteresting and restless leisure.

AFFECTIONATE intercourse is an inexhaustible fund of delight and happiness. In the expression of our feelings, in the communication of our opinions, in the reciprocal interchange of ideas and sentiments, there lies a treasure of enjoyment, for which the solitary hermit, and even the surly misanthrope, continually sighs. We cannot impart our sorrows to the senseless rock; the passing gale cannot be made the confidant of our cares and pleasures: we languish for a congenial soul, to sympathise in our grief, and participate our joy. Banished from the world, and the society of congenial

genial spirits, our reflections, our sallies of fancy, our discoveries in science, our emotions of triumph and joy, afford us but an imperfect and unsatisfactory pleasure ; and even among the tumultuous concourse of mankind, we remain cheerless, desolate, and empty, without the presence and communion of a kindred heart.

YET when an enterprising and ardent mind only retires from the uninteresting distractions of company, to digest and mature in solitude, its adventurous and capacious projects, or a wounded spirit seeks shelter in the lenient repose of privacy, from the shocks of rivalry, the intrusions of misguided friendship, and the malicious assaults of secret or avowed enmity, how erroneous and cruel, to brand their dispositions with the character of being unsocial and inhuman ! Should love, disappointed or betrayed, have disordered or suspended the fine and gentle affections that compose and cement the most pleasing and durable engagements of society ; should the bleeding heart shrink from contact with a careless or unfeeling world, that seems to offer it no consolation of sympathy, no recompence of hope, is not its lacerated and fearful sensibility, too often defamed, as a sullen or frantic misanthropy ? Affection, tenderness, susceptibility of soul, how are they mistaken ! how are they outraged ! Men do not perceive, that the semblance

of kindness may be worn by selfishness and inhumanity; and that the liveliest sympathy may lie concealed in an apparent dislike to human intercourse.

Nothing can be more fallacious and variable than the exterior of Sensibility; nothing more remote from her proper shape, than the form in which she occasionally presents herself. A singular instance of this, in her own person, was once related to me by a lady, whose guardian had presented her, when a child, with a superb doll, which, after caressing some time, with much fondness, she, apparently in a fally of petulance, tossed into the fire. The offended donor, who desirous to witness the effect of his gift had not quitted the apartment, observed the action, without being able to discover the emotions that had prompted it, and hastily demanded the reason of a conduct so unexpected. The child replied, with tears of chagrin and disappointment, "I have been telling the baby, again and again, that I loved her dearly, and she has never said she loved me in return."

We may be frequently driven from scenes of social happiness, by an extreme passion for the enjoyment of them: but if we are urged to retirement, by a real repugnance to the presence of mankind, we must be destitute of the feelings of men.

OUR

OUR powers, no less than our infirmities, prompt us to communication and confidence; and we examine every one who approaches us, with the wish to discover an avenue which may conduct us to his regard and affection. How anxiously do we all search after some amiable being, whom we may join to our hearts by the closest ties of attachment; who may give a yet untasted zest to our existence, and on his part, receive sensations of delight, before unknown, from the attentions and endearments of our love. Untoward circumstances, it is true, do not suffer all to make the election which their hearts prompt, and their reason approves; but the impatient necessity for mutual intercourse, surmounts every difficulty in the choice of the companion. Many a despairing damsel probably reasons like the Hanoverian wench, who, when reproached with the countless succession of her lovers, sharply replied, "A maid must have a friend to lean her cares and weaknesses on, if it be but a broomstick."

BENEVOLENCE, affection, inclination toward love and sympathy, joined with the impulse to domestic intimacy which they tend to produce, develop the powers, and awaken the virtues of man. Without these enlivening emotions, he would slumber in brute indifference and grossness, careless of his talents to please, and negligent of his



his powers to improve : stimulated by them, he cultivates and multiplies his energies ; and, while rendering himself instrumental to the happiness of others, secures resources for his own.

SUCH, however, as are accustomed to seek all their pleasures in society, are usually disabled from contributing any thing toward their own amusement. To them, a day's absence from the world, is an exile from existence ; trained to seek all their frivolous gratifications in the tumult and dissipation of fashionable crowds, and having neglected the means of deriving happiness from their own minds, they finally lose the capacity of relishing any calm, heartfelt, and independent enjoyment ; useless and burthensome to themselves, they strive to avoid sinking in the fathomless abyss of their own inanity, by catching at the frail supports offered them by the mirth and levity of company.

No age was ever so favourable to this habit as the present : never was Europe so social ; but never was it less domestic and affectionate. The rage for company has infected every class and condition. Retirement, privacy, home, are almost universally odious. The world has conspired not only to avoid, but to stigmatise them ; and he who does not consume and dissipate his whole life in a succession

succession of trifling visits, is regarded as a morose censor of his companions, and an enemy to his fellow-creatures. Children, among the first habits of life, and sometimes as its sole duties, are practised in the idle formalities of what is called good company. They are taught to salute their playmates, and even their parents, with ceremonious preciseness. Instead of the sports and business proper to their age, they are encouraged in giving treats, and forming card-parties. The dissipation of the metropolis is aped, with magnificence and taste ludicrously inferior, in every provincial town; the least of which boasts of its clubs and its assembly. At the latter are collected all the pretenders to fashion and gentility; and while the youth of one sex are corrupting the simplicity of their manners, by coquetry, and the goodness of their dispositions by competition and rivalry; and those of the other by the practice and affectation of a dissolute and insidious gallantry; and both are inflaming their passions, by riotous and wanton mirth; their seniors are ruining their tempers, and impairing their little incomes, at sixpenny whist and cassino.

So universally does this spirit pervade Europe, that in the northern part of Germany, even the Gypsies have their clubs. These respectable personages assemble every Sunday evening at the  
B 4 mills,

mills, with which that country abounds, where they enjoy their pipes, and riot in the abject gains, or dishonest spoils of the six preceding days. The proprietors of the mills have a double motive for tolerating such meetings. In consideration of their kindness, their property is esteemed inviolable by these depredators; from whose reports, too, they learn enough of the transactions and occurrences in the neighbouring families, to make an important figure in their own parties.

THIS ungoverned habit of seeking our content elsewhere than in our own bosoms, and the circle over which we can diffuse a real and innocent satisfaction, is applauded by the present age, as an improvement on happiness, an extension of the affections, and a humaniser of the manners. To learn mutual kindness, we take the lessons of contentious vanity; in jealous rivalry, we are taught to seek liberality, concord, and sympathy; and to found a love of our fellow-creatures on the weariness of ourselves.

THE restless scourge of discontent, the fretful craving for pastime and entertainment, it is, that drives a frivolous and empty generation, into company; yet, no-where are they so likely to meet their enemy, as in this fancied asylum. That feeling which makes existence a torment, renders every

every one, cursed with its attack, his own most mortal enemy; saps and consumes all the forces of the soul, and crushes all its faculties of enjoyment and action, under melancholy languor, and oppressive dejection. We hope to disengage ourselves from the weight of listlessness, that presses so intemperably on our spirits, in the levity of dissipation, or the gaiety and splendour of fashion. But how few find these relieve and recreate their supine and sinking vigour! The same painful inquietude that galled them in the tiresome uniformity of an inactive and vacant solitude, pursues them into the crowded halls of elegance and festivity; and while they eagerly look round for something that may supply this vacancy of the soul, they exhaust the mind of its little remaining strength; enlarge the void they are striving to replenish; and lose, by their very solicitude in seeking it, the power of retaining and enjoying amusement.

THIS restless sensation is most apt to torment and harass us, when we are constrained to continue long in any place, where nothing presents itself to engage our curiosity, or to interest our passions; where we are persecuted by the importunities of those, whom we regard with indifference, distaste, or contempt. How frequently does a loquacious coxcomb glow with admiration  
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of his own powers of pleasing, while his tiresome prate is the pest of all around him! In the parade of his vanities, and ostentation of his folly, he reaps supreme felicity; not having sense enough to perceive or suspect, that the entertainment he receives, is at the expence of a numerous circle, whom he teazes with his idle volubility, and disgusts by his troublesome impertinence.

ALL characters experience the power of this vexatious discontent, though in various degrees; as all are more or less subjected to the appetites of hunger and thirst. The servant of the great LEIBNITZ reported, that his master, when at church, constantly made notes of the preacher's discourse; but it is more probable, (the peculiar character of the philosopher, and the eloquence usual among German divines, considered,) that Leibnitz committed to paper his own abundant and important thoughts, when those of the minister became tedious and uninteresting.

MOST persons are driven into company by weariness of themselves; while some there are, whom weariness of company sends into solitude. An indolent person is generally apt to grow tired of himself: a man of activity can endure nothing that fetters his own exertions. The one, to find amusement, is forced to abandon himself: the other

other returns into his own mind, for the pleasures he has vainly sought in the communion of his fellows.

To ignorant and vacant minds, all that interests strong and enlightened characters, is tedious and disagreeable : men of talents are disgusted by the insipid and frivolous delights and amusements of the unthinking multitude. To these latter, every thing is tiresome and offensive that does not interest or instruct ; that neither creates emotion, nor excites intellect. A strong mind, when joined with assured manners and high spirits, sometimes takes pleasure in the society of inferior minds, where its energy enables it to show its superiority : but genius, when fettered by diffidence, or oppressed by misfortune, shrinks from the burthen of company, sensible that it must, under such circumstances, yield to every frivolous and impertinent babbler.

To get rid of the lassitude so often complained of, the head must be employed, or the senses awakened ; gratification must be found for the body, or diversion for the mind. But how much more easy is it to feel, than to think ; to receive, than to give ? How many are in want of that entertainment, which but few can afford ? Hence

it is, mankind crowd so eagerly to places where there is noise and bustle; to scenes of riotous festivity; to spectacles of various and extraordinary objects. In what throngs do they pour to assemblies and balls, to public walks and exhibitions; where their senses are employed, and their imaginations enlivened by a profusion of lights, the splendour of decoration, and the gaudiness of apparel. All this complicated and expensive apparatus, the voluptuous music, the inflammatory dance, are exerted to move and agitate the languid and stagnant sensibilities of the soul.

SUCH amusements may be considered as machines, acting on man, without the co-operation of his own effort; while to obtain the pleasures, of which solitude is susceptible, too frequently demands a degree of attention, laborious and fatiguing. Many indeed, whose dispositions have been depraved, and their faculties narrowed by continual intercourse with vanity and nonsense, have neither inclination, nor even organs, to relish the delights of seclusion; which, as it affords pleasures independent of common society, requires powers that common society cannot bestow. The love of solitude, therefore, will ever be less general than the desire of company; and men will be apt to indulge their indolence, by putting up with entertainments

tertainments which demand the least trouble, rather than pursue, with diligence and activity, those that offer the noblest and most refined gratification.

INTELLIGENT and active minds are generally cheerful and gay in company, while they enjoy the vigour of health, are enlivened with the vivacity of youth, and elated with success. But when soured by injustice, or saddened by disappointment they find in general conversation more chagrin than amusement; they turn with contempt from its frivolity, and from its less venial offences with disgust.

VULGAR characters find no pleasure in any object the impressions of which are not gross, violent, and tumultuous. To them, scandal, intemperance, buffoonery and indecency, are the great delights of society. The sluggish, stupid, but sensual Siberians, derive their only amusement from incontinence. Among this people, both sexes are steeped in such brutal sloth and indulgence, that sensations in the least refined and intellectual, have no influence upon their fancy, or their nerves.

THE indolent, even in indulging their social propensities, seldom succeed in obtaining the gratification of which they are ever in pursuit.

They



They are always dissatisfied with what is before them ; still looking out for some absent enjoyment or occupation, which seems to promise sensations more poignant, satisfaction more complete. They have always pleasure in view, yet it always eludes their attempts to seize it. They are in constant action, yet never effect any purpose : they are in perpetual motion, yet make no advance. They complain of the lapse of time, without increasing their diligence to employ it ; and though the expiration of each succeeding year fills them with alarm and consternation, not a sun rises, but they say within themselves, "*What shall we do to get through this day?*" In summer they are impatient for winter ; in winter they are anxious for the return of summer : in the morning they languish for evening ; at night for the morning : and as each in due order arrives, they meet it with indifference or discontent.

THOUGH society, as it appears, is but too frequently fought from weak and vicious motives, and therefore acts to foster and strengthen the follies and vices that gave it birth, yet it must be allowed that there is a just and rational intercourse, to which men are moved by liberal and virtuous inducements, and which promotes the benevolent dispositions and noble designs, which lead to its cultivation. The society of the worthy and intelligent,

ligent, besides being a pleasant and salutary recreation from business and care, is fraught with numerous means of improvement, to persons of every age and condition. It imparts, in the liveliest and most impressive form, the knowledge and experience of others : it enlarges our own, in the most efficacious and durable manner : it develops the sentiments and energies of the young, and exercises and enlivens the faculties of the aged : it strengthens the character : it fashions the manners : and gives firmness, address, and promptitude, to the conduct, in all the affairs and exigencies of life. The conversation of the sage and experienced, is one of the shortest and surest roads to ability and wisdom.

COMPANY is frequently sought by the unhappy, as a shelter from the invasion of sorrow ; as a relief from the pangs of established grief ; or as a respite from the forebodings of approaching affliction. Solitude is often terrible to the mourner, whose happiness is buried in an untimely grave ; who would give all the joys of earth, for one accent of the beloved voice, whose tuneful vibrations must never more fill his ear and heart with rapture ; and who, when alone, languishes with the remembrance of his irreparable loss.

To some wretched beings, the avenging scourge  
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of violated conscience renders solitude terrible: every relapse into themselves, recalls the stings of secret remorse, which are lulled only in the intoxication of pleasure, or silenced in the clamour of crowds. Others, whose happiness is founded on popular favour, and who have purchased applause with actions of counterfeit and spurious virtue, are in continual anxiety for the possession of their ill-gained reputation: they would fain be every where at once, to guard their insecure, because fraudulent, acquisition. They prostrate themselves before the pride of the great; they offer the incense of adulation to their vanity; they discover elegance in their follies, and dignity in their vices. They see nothing to censure, but genius that has provoked the jealousy, and virtue that has excited the envy, of the vulgar of every rank. They comply with all the follies of their age; they bow to its errors; they cherish its prejudices; they pay homage to its superstitions; they applaud even its servility or barbarism. For this they are welcomed in every fashionable circle; but for this, solitude is to them, dreary and insupportable.

To many also, solitude, like religion, has been pictured with so sad and forbidding an aspect, that they carefully banish it from all their prospects of hope, and scenes of enjoyment. They fly to it  
only

only in the transports of passion, the languor of disappointment, or the bitterness of shame; at seasons when they are incapable of enjoying its advantages, even could they understand them. But he who knows the true nature and influence of Solitude, (like him who is acquainted with the efficacy and virtues of Religion,) will seek it in the plenitude of his joys, as the only means of containing their fullness: he will retire to it to taste at leisure all the richness of his content: he will fly to its uninterrupted openness, to expatiate at large in his happiness, unconfined by the restraints, undisturbed by the importunities of company.

NATURAL therefore, and even necessary as is the love of association; conducive as it is to our ease and pleasure, to seek the commerce of our fellow-creatures; favourable as this disposition will be found, within proper limitations, to the cultivation of intellect, the refinement of manners, and the amendment of the heart; yet must we not consider every person as a melancholy and peevish invalid, or a morose and unsocial misanthrope, who abstains from a promiscuous and restless commerce with the world; or who occasionally shuns the crowd to converse with himself in total retirement and seclusion.

## CHAPTER THE SECOND.

## ON THE LOVE OF SOLITUDE.

**T**HE love of Solitude is an emotion of the soul, endeavouring to escape the pain of constraint and interruption. Sometimes it is a gentle inclination to repose; sometimes an impatient aspiration to indulge the free exercise of our own energies; and sometimes a calm and temperate desire to taste the intrinsic sweets of unmolested existence. To these inclinations and enjoyments, the major part of mankind are strangers: their pleasures are sought in directions the most opposite; and no character is more rare, than a sincere and constant lover of retirement. To be really and steadily attached to it, we must, in the opinion of the great Bacon, be either more or less than men.

It is a just distinction, that the slothful are not impelled into solitude, but remain buried in it under the weight of listlessness and apathy. We must not conceive, therefore, that habits of seclusion always indicate the vigour and richness of the mind wherein they are found. Solitude is frequently cherished, not from firmness, and a love of independence,

independence, but from inactivity, and helplessness of character. As poverty of intellect, when joined with acute feelings, has frequently been the motive to a continual and eager intercourse with the world; so, when combined with a dull insensibility, it has often conducted its possessor to the cloister. Shame or remorse, a poignant sense of past follies, the regret of disappointed hope, or the lassitude of sickness, may so wound or enervate the soul, that it shall shrink from the sight and touch of its equals, and retire to bleed and languish, unmolested, except by its internal cares, in the coverts of solitude. In these instances, the disposition to retreat is not an active impulse of the mind to self-collection; but a fearful and pusillanimous aversion from the shocks and the attrition of society.

MANY persons are conducted from the commerce of the world by satiety of its pleasures. The querulous HERACLITUS, whom the throne had not guarded against the intrusions of *eunuchs*, and who could find no satisfaction in the affection of his fellow-creatures, fled their presence, and sought contentment in his hatred of them. He fixed his habitation on a hill, and lived on the rude produce of the earth among the beasts of the desert: for him the magnificence of art, the cultivation of cities, the talents and virtues of men, had no attraction.

attraction. This temper of mind rather indicates a sickness and languor, than a sanity and vigour of intellect, and marks less a fine and exquisite sense of enjoyment, than one worn out, become callous and exhausted.

HE, who after having experienced all the delights that inspire the wishes and prompt the efforts of man; who after having indulged his sense in every luxury, and his imagination in every enjoyment; who after having fed his pride with the possession of glory, and the exercise of dominion, fights within himself, "*All is vanity!*" he, who after having been impelled through life by a succession of vehement passions, is no longer sensible to the impulse of any desire, but regards all objects of human pursuit with indifference and dislike, is the sad victim of satiety. He may not, perhaps, abandon the world, stripped and shorn of all delight and value as it appears to him, to take his dwelling and nourishment with the brute creation; but of all his resources solitude will in general be the last. I have seen princes and nobles, amid the apparent abundance of their pleasures and glories, sinking under the oppression of this cruel disgust; life appeared to them scarcely worth the retaining: all that enriched or embellished it, seemed as despicable as the dust beneath their feet. Solitude alone was a cushion on which they

they found rest. But Solitude itself, far from mitigating, serves only to exasperate the misery of these unhappy mortals, if they can people the deserts of retirement only with their regrets; if they cannot forget their disappointments, and attach themselves to quiet occupations and simple amusements; with the same appetite and ardour as they formerly fought glory at the head of armies, and in the labours of the cabinet; or forgot it in the embraces of the fair.

THE love of retirement is to be considered then as arising from various sources. In some it is an aversion from whatever incommodes, disgusts, and offends us in the vices or follies of our associates; it is a tendency to self-collection and freedom. In vigorous and active spirits, it is a struggle to shake off the incumbrance and impediments that confine their exertions, and to live to the enjoyment of that inward delight, which every one, whose disposition is cheerful, and whose intellect is rich and fertile, can, when alone, generally derive from the exercise of his own faculties. The desire of solitude is in all men the love of liberty: but its form varies according to the character of the individual. The active is attached to it, because it enables him to move and employ himself without constraint or interruption: the more still and calm, because he



can undisturbedly enjoy, in the protection of its shade, his beloved tranquillity.

THE desire of repose and retreat into ourselves, naturally takes place when we have been long and unwillingly detained and employed out of our proper character, and against our inclinations. We then languish for the refreshment of undisturbed leisure, in which alone we can taste the true enjoyment of our faculties. Many a one is indeed most useful to his fellow-creatures, while he conceives himself, by the constant claims of his duties, deprived of all enjoyment of his own existence. Let such however reflect, that though the difficulties and obstacles in the way of all improvements of human life, (opposed too often even by those to whom their benefits are directed,) may sometimes chagrin their most zealous promoters, yet there is a calm, though proud, delight in the consciousness of being instrumental in such benevolence, which amply repays all the sacrifices incurred in its accomplishment. This consoling sentiment sustains him in all his fruitless efforts; in all his painful and tedious labours; in those contests with the intolerance, caprice, waywardness, and contumely of the great and powerful, to which all must submit, who aspire to promote the interests, and improve the happiness of mankind.

Depressed

Depressed by temporary discouragement and resentment, the most virtuous will sometimes accept his fate of unkindness, repine at the tyranny of his duties, and lament the want of that quiet leisure and peaceful recreation; congenial to his nature. With what delight must a statesman of fine taste and liberal knowledge, rise from the minute and dull detail of his official business, and recur to the stores of his memory, or encourage the excursions of imagination! Every joy of freedom and leisure is endeared by its contrast with the insipid labours from which he has escaped; and the charm of vicissitude is added to the enjoyment of the pleasures he loves.

THIS vicissitude is a necessary ingredient in all the occupations, amusements, and enjoyments of life. The most delightful object, by constant presence, ceases to impress us with delight; till we at length languish in the possession of what we have most passionately loved. Satiated with solitude, our nature demands the recreation of company; and when the amusements of the social circle have lost the power to interest or please, retirement will afford us a certain restorative. PASCAL, though a character of incessant activity, declares the love of quiet and tranquillity to be a relique of the original grandeur and purity of man; and re-

peatedly affirms that our true happiness consists in repose and solitude.

TRANQUILLITY is the wish of the wise amid the occupations of duty, the tasks of glory, and the solicitations of pleasure. In the most trivial, as in the most capacious projects of the soul, repose is ever regarded as the termination and recompense of its labours. PYRRHUS, the ambitious, restless PYRRHUS, proposed the enjoyment of ease and quiet, as the ultimate object of his enterprises. How precious must tranquillity have appeared to the great FREDERICK, in the very career of his glorious achievements, when he once exclaimed, after a splendid victory, "*Will my torments never be concluded?*" The Emperor JOSEPH, some years since, asked our famous pedestrian, Baron GROTHAUS, what countries he would next visit? GROTHAUS enumerated many, which, in succession, he proposed to traverse. "And after that?" demanded the Emperor. "After that," returned the Baron, "I will settle myself on my paternal acres, and amuse myself in planting cabbages." Ah! "go and settle thyself now in thy paternal acres," rejoined the good Emperor, "and amuse thyself in planting cabbages at once."

Those whom Fate has condemned to labour at  
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the promotion of objects from which their reason revolts, or their hearts derive no delight ; ministers who toil to accomplish the prosperity and happiness of a perverse people, and still find their noble efforts unthankfully repulsed, or obstinately frustrated, experience this impatient longing for the end of the tedious day, that may bring them an hour's repose and quietude. With anxious expectation does the seaman on the restless and turbulent ocean lift the eye of hope over the rude and perilous waves ; soothing his present hardships and distress by the anticipated calm and safety of the distant haven. The courtier grows weary of his splendid slavery ; the great and mighty of the earth sicken beneath their oppressive dignities ; the monarch encircled by the pomps and pleasures of dominion, finds them fade and pall upon the sense ; and all seek to recede into the cool and quiet seats of sequestration, to recover from the fatigue, and escape the disgusts of their cares.

WHILE PUBLIUS SCIPIO sustained the dignities and labours of the highest offices in Rome, he frequently withdrew from the importunate attentions of the crowd that surrounded him, and sought the peaceful bosom of privacy. Though he did not, like TULLY, occupy his leisure in the labours of literature and philosophy, yet he meditated in silence on the interests of his country, and declared  
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he was never less alone than when by himself. Even when his illustrious actions had rendered him the most conspicuous citizen of imperial Rome, he voluntarily abandoned the scene of his glory, and retreated to his villa at Lâternum; where hidden from public admiration, in a forest, he closed, in majestic seclusion, his glorious career.

CICERO, possessed of the entire heart of every virtuous Roman, and enjoying an authority almost unparalleled over the minds of his fellow-citizens, withdrew with receding liberty from the degenerate city; and assuaged the bitterness of his anguish, for the humiliation of guilty Rome, in the salutary quiet of his shady Tusculum. The gay and elegant HORACE, in the noon-tide of regal favour, forgot the smiles of imperial kindness, and the delights of a court the most refined and brilliant that ever surrounded a monarch, in the romantic and savage wildness of his solitary Tibur.

Few monarchs have concluded their lives in more noble tranquillity than the Emperor DIO-  
CLESIAN; who, obnoxious as he has been rendered by his persecution of the Christians, merits the name of a great man and a wise and magnanimous ruler. After having reigned twenty-five years with success and triumph almost unexampled in the history of declining Rome, he resolved to divest himself

himself of the purple, the faded glories of which he had renewed. Books had not taught him a philosophy so unusual on the throne; for no part of his active life had been occupied with their study; yet was he the first of the Roman princes, who had the greatness to renounce the empire he had so long and so honourably supported.\* The conquest of all his enemies had rendered his reign splendid; the accomplishment of his designs made it prosperous; he was only in his sixtieth year, and in the unimpaired vigour of his faculties. A decline of health, which rendered his office burthenome to him, and was in its turn aggravated by the cares and duties of his situation, determined him to crown his long labours with the repose to which they had so well entitled him. He chose a spacious plain near *Nicomedia* as the scene of his abdication. There addressing, from an elevated throne, a vast body of the people and army, he announced his design, in an oration full of dignity and wisdom; and having formally resigned his power to younger and more active successors, he escaped from the acclamations of the astonished multitude; and passing through *Nicomedia* in a covered carriage, proceeded to his long-elected

\* *Solus omnium*, (is the observation of a Roman historian on his conduct) *post conditum Romanum imperium, qui ex tanto fastigio sponte ad private vite statum civilitatemque remearet.*

retreat in Dalmatia. **DIOCLESIAN** had elevated himself to the imperial dignity from an obscure situation ; and now with equal glory he descended from the imperial dignity into privacy. He lived nine years in the tranquil and happy leisure of *Salona*. He could not indeed amuse the void of solitude with the treasures of science ; but he had a relish for the natural and simple pleasures of life. He erected a commodious palace ; he planted gardens and formed delightful scenes around it. His famous reply to his colleague, **MAXIMIAN**, who had joined him in abdicating the imperial dignity, but who tormented with restless ambition, was continually urging him to resume his high station, testifies at once the wisdom and moderation of his character, and the accuracy with which he had judged of his disposition and resources in deciding on the change of his situation. “ If,” said Dioclesian, “ I should point out to you all the plants  
“ my own care has reared in *Salona*, and could  
“ disclose to you the serene and cheerful heart  
“ with which I have watched their growth, you  
“ would cease to persuade my return to the anx-  
“ ieties, chagrins, and agitations, which lurk  
“ beneath the splendid but cumberous folds of  
“ the purple.”

**ZENOBI**A, the celebrated sovereign of *Palmyra*, who fed the greatness of her soul with the noble  
images

images of Homer, and the exalted precepts of Plato ; who equalled the most famous of her sex in personal beauty, and surpassed them all in chastity, genius, and heroism ; who spread the terror of her arms over *Arabia*, *Armenia*, and *Persia* ; who had foiled, and even for some time vanquished, the Roman victors of the world, was finally defeated and captured by the warlike Emperor AURELIAN. The conqueror respected her extraordinary endowments, and presented her with a delightful villa at *Tricoli*, where she supported her fate with dignity ; found full consolation for her misfortunes in studious solitude ; and learnt, that the cares of ambition were well exchanged for the enjoyment of ease, and the pursuits of philosophy.

IN the solitary and humble monastery of *St. Jusus*, the Emperor CHARLES buried the views of dominion and plans of aggrandisement, with which for half a century he had kept Europe in continual disquietude and commotion. In an obscure solitude he forgot all the splendid visions of *Universal Monarchy*, to realize which he had sacrificed the pleasures of royalty, and consumed the flower of youth and vigour of manhood, in an incessant study to trouble the repose and endanger the safety of all the neighbouring nations.

ALL these examples testify, that the desire of  
independence



independence and leisure is one of the most powerful affections of the human breast; since crowns have been renounced at its instigation, and forgotten in its enjoyment. These instances may instruct us too, that a judicious use of solitude amply rewards us for the sacrifice of all which the world prizes the highest, and pursues the most passionately.

BUT the inclination to shun society arises from many other sources, well deserving a minute investigation. The hypochondria sometimes renders the commerce of our fellow-creatures insupportable to us: frequently we fly them, disgusted with their fear of truth, and their illiberal encouragement of calumny. Sometimes their perverse judgments and invidious passions drive us from their presence; and sometimes, carrying our disdain of their follies, and horror of their vices, into a scorn and hatred of their persons, we shrink from their intercourse with sensations of an angry and criminal misanthropy. Some few, quitting the company of their contemporaries to listen to the discourse of the wise and virtuous, whose lives ennobled other ages, but whose works survive to instruct the present, neglect the news of the day to feed their minds with the immortal truths of morality and science. Others, instigated by religious fervour, and perceiving nothing but corruption in the joys  
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of social life, and sinful abomination in its virtues, retire from the spectacle to contemplate in the sacred gloom of the monastery, or the solitude of the cave and desert, a Being whose essence is unalterable purity, unlimited goodness and perfection.

THE state of soul into which the hypochondria plunges us, is an incapacity and even unwillingness to be pleased; while we acknowledge this temper to be our scourge and torment, we supinely sink under its influence, and voluntarily court, rather than make the efforts necessary to fly, the solitude that encourages and strengthens it. Weighed down by gloom and sadness, and having his imagination crowded with mournful and afflicting objects, the hypochondriac opens his heart to no impressions of pleasure: wanting the festal garment of sympathetic disposition, he ventures not into the palace of joy; the gaiety of which would indeed exasperate his melancholy either by the air of impertinence its mirth would wear to his dis-tempered mind, or by the spectacle it would offer of pleasures which had ceased to charm him. In vain does the importunity of ceremony, or the well-meant kindness of officious friendship, drag him into the circles of information, politeness, or vivacity; he feels all the faculties of his spirit confined and disabled; he appears to inhale a noisome vapour from that which yields to others delight and

and fragrance. Oppressed by the sad persuasion, that his heart is not in unison with any, he has neither power nor resolution to do or say any thing to please or benefit his companions. His faculties languish and wither; his knowledge wastes and decays; or they side with his disease, and reinforce the malignity of his affliction. To him every object and every action wears a complexion of enmity: he distorts the offers of kindness into the snares of designing rapine or insidious malice; and repels the gentle offices of pity as the contumelies of wanton insolence. Devoured by this horrible sickness of the soul, which the world in its ignorance of the mental anguish and bodily sufferings by which it is produced, join to ridicule and condemn; with this thorn rankling in his heart, the afflicted spirit in every place, where the gay assemble, and hilarity and merriment and pomp and luxury abound, feels emotions of anguish and horror, such as might well be inspired by a charnel-house or a gibbet.

THIS distempered state of soul accordingly increases the inclination to be alone, and impels the sufferer to a trembling seclusion from the conversation and even aspect of men. This expedient affords the mind no repose; but it allows the consolation of such reflections as these:—"Here I am unmolested and free; here I can act as I will;

no

“ no one overwhelms me with the troublesome im-  
 “ pertinence of ceremony ; no one chafes and galls  
 “ me with the importunities of inquisitiveness and  
 “ familiarity ; no one stings me to the heart with  
 “ the sneering insult of civil derision.” With the  
 terror of these the hypochondriac is ever perse-  
 cuted ; he therefore shrinks from the presence of  
 all who do not understand and sympathise with his  
 wretchedness, and meet the expression of it with  
 complaisance, respect, and tenderness.

SOMETIMES the bias to retirement is impressed  
 on us by our disgust at the false and perverse opi-  
 nions of men. Disdain for their esteem renders us  
 careless of their commerce, and we apply to soli-  
 tude for a more grateful and salutary food for the  
 intellect, and a more healthful repose for the heart.

HE who keeps himself independent of the cur-  
 rent prejudices of his neighbours ; who does not  
 fashion his opinions and sentiments by the ignorant  
 and capricious determinations of the thoughtless  
 multitude ; who is too reasonable to expect to  
 guide, and too free to be guided by their decisions ;  
 who lives in kindness with the age in which Pro-  
 vidence has placed him ; and takes an interest and  
 delight in its acquisitions of happiness and science ;  
 Such a man detaches himself from the common  
 herd of his contemporaries, and feels his enjoyment

of and inclination toward solitude, quickened and fortified by every new observation of the crude and groundless opinions of the misjudging vulgar.

How far any place or age is to be considered as enlightened is not to be determined by the entire unanimity of judgment which may prevail, but by the freedom with which each individual thinks for himself, and the information on which he grounds and maintains his own conviction. If one opinion is universally prevalent, it amounts to a presumption, that no one has a sentiment of his own ; and when the multitude blindly adopts certain opinions of men and things, there will always rage among it an epidemic fury of applause and condemnation.

To every character elevated above the crowd the impulse to solitude is natural, wherever the seat of equity and reason is usurped by narrow prejudice and illiberal folly ; where every absurdity is circulated with pride, and received with passion ; where the new tracks of a generous and independent virtue are treated as dangerous irregularities, or scoffed at as the caprices of affectation and vanity ; where a few individuals, neither distinguished for discernment nor integrity, govern the general taste ; and with insolent or envious intolerance proscribe every other system than their own.

No

No one has the absolute controul of his taste or sentiments; they are modified and shaped in all by education, connections, situation, and accident; and few feel exactly alike on the simplest and most familiar subjects. To those, therefore, who consult their own ideas, and employ their own powers of discernment, the society of such as have only a borrowed taste in literature and morals is insipid and tiresome.

BENEATH the slavish yoke of vulgar prejudice and dogmatism no clear and enfranchised mind bows the neck. Neither does any man, of a firm and reflecting character, suffer his decisions to be influenced by the sentence of supercilious wittlings; who, destitute of all solid merit, decry and depreciate its currency in the world, and strive to substitute the futile and unsubstantial coin of their own fallacious qualities. These pigmy critics are the natural enemies of every thing great and elevated; the appearance of which is insupportable to their feelings, because its establishment would be mortal to their consequence. They have no ambition so much at heart, as to depress and extinguish the reputations of their contemporaries; to arrest their discoveries; to impede their advances, by entangling their feet among the brambles of fashionable derision or vulgar hatred. They erect themselves into arbiters of all affairs of reason

and taste ; they arraign and condemn excellence in all forms ; and, like grovelling toads, trailing their slime wherever they move, discharge their frothy venom on every fair flower and balsamic plant.

WHAT liberal and manly spirit does not fedulously shun the places where these lords of fashion assemble with sneering countenances and invidious hearts ; where they suspend their mutual jealousies and rivalry, to banter and deride in concert every virtue that looks above them ; and direct the torrent of reproach and hatred against all that marks an adventurous and inquiring spirit ; while the supine and inactive character has their zealous support, as long as he does not aspire to merit better suffrages.

THE attachment to seclusion therefore seems natural and laudable in every place, where it is accounted wise and rational to regard all noble and useful designs and conceptions as absurd and extravagant deliriums ; where the experience of every hour shows, that to the witling, friendship, love, nature, truth, and justice, are idle sounds ; devoid of sense, and barren of interest or delight, as eloquence to asses, or music to swine. Who that has a sense and enjoyment of what is great and arduous, can delight in the society of such as vilify the most original and capacious minds, as shallow

shallow dunces, vain sophists, or presumptuous and visionary madmen? Who can endure to listen to the flippant and senseless scorn with which fine ladies, whose sole meditations have been in the looking-glass, and who have studied no relations but that of ribands to the complexion, asperse whatever is signalized by life, intelligence, or elevation? What soul, unless contracted to the local diminutiveness of the place in which accident has confined it, can feel itself at home, where nothing is held sterling that has not received the stamp, that does not bear the imprimatur of coxcombs and coquets; interested by their mean but eager ambition, to sustain the rights and credit of levity and nonsense: where none can form or maintain a passion for truth and virtue, but by an obstinate contention with the manners and principles of all his associates; and an invincible disregard of the envious jealousy of the great, or the blind hatred of the rabble.

Such epidemic folly and envy, wherever they appear, afford an excuse for an attachment to solitude. Minds of the most unwearied and dauntless benevolence, must occasionally incline to abandon society, when they find their actions misrepresented and condemned; their principles falsified and reprobated; their characters defamed, and their peace attacked on every side, by those, who, if gratitude were as universal as envy, would have



been the first to crown them, with the admiration and love which their generous labours and glorious exertions merited.

THE reign of envious prejudice, oppressive as it is, is fugitive ; or rather while its tyranny is perpetual, its objects are incessantly changing ; and those who were its victims are most sure to become its favourites. The merits of a great man, defamed and hooted as long as his ears and heart would have been sensible to the acclamations of applause, generally await only his death to be fully and clamorously recognized and applauded. No longer a living reproach to the mean and frivolous, who compose the mass of every generation, he becomes their delight and veneration. As during his life his name was degraded and thrust down beneath those of his predecessors, his decease exalts him to the equal glory of being employed by the same jealousy of contemporary pre-eminence, as an engine, to overthrow and abolish the rising excellence of those who succeed him.

INTOLERANCE and superstition, moral and political, as well as religious, public calumny and secret scandal, have raged against the best and greatest men in all ages, and among every people. Of this universal tax on virtue and genius, the history of the celebrated HUME yields a remarkable example.

example. He was of a sedate and moderate character, and through his life maintained an unblemished reputation for integrity of principle, and decency of manners. His good humour was invariable ; and, whether in the gaiety of company, or the silence of his closet, his cheerfulness never deserted him. His tranquillity was not to be disturbed ; and he perused, with the most unmoved indifference, the invectives, some of them sufficiently scurrilous, which were published against him. The lower orders in his neighbourhood, whom jealous and revengeful artifices had excited to pursue him with obloquy and outrages, observing the humanity and benevolence of his life, relented from their ill-judged resentment, and experienced his goodness with reverence and gratitude. As his conduct appeared on all occasions, just, resolute, and manly, without the slightest tincture of ostentation, or parade, so his discourse, which abounded in sagacity and science, never exhibited any airs of presuming erudition. He was always affable and obliging ; and his friendship was the spontaneous emanation of a kind and social heart, unadorned but by sincerity, unenforced but by native promptitude and ardour.

It is to be regretted that this writer may be reproached for having abused his talents, to the injury of religion ; but his morals would perhaps

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have recommended genuine Christianity, in the purity of its early ages, more powerfully than the flaming zeal of an host of persecutors, or an army of martyrs. He possessed the unalterable mildness and benignity of heart, and the strength and elevation of character, which not merely render a man happy in himself, but fit him for the diffusion of general improvement and happiness.

SUCH is the opinion now generally entertained of HUME by the English; but far different was the sentence of his contemporaries! Who that is acquainted with the reception which his works experienced from the public, can blame him for conceiving the wish to bury himself in solitude? Yet he was not placed in a barbarous land, nor in an illiterate age; he lived amid a free and philosophical people, and in an æra of illumination, liberality, and freedom.

It may be urged, that Hume's infidelity was the rock on which his reputation was wrecked: but, when we reflect how tolerant in their sentiments, and how bold in their inquiries, the English are, it seems absurd to ascribe to scepticism only the utter ill-success of any of their writers. Something may be allowed to their national dislike of the Scots; but this will explain little; for Hume experienced no great favour even from his countrymen. His

own history of his literary career cannot be perused without astonishment; and every student that meditates it, must feel all assurance of enjoying his own fame expire in his bosom.

It requires an effort of faith to credit this writer's report of the contemptuous repulses his several compositions received from the public. At the close of the year 1738, appeared his *Treatise of Human Nature*. "Never," says he, "was a literary attempt more unfortunate: this piece fell *dead-born from the press*, without reaching such distinction as even to excite a murmur among the zealots." He interwove the substance of this work into his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, which was published ten years later, while the author was at Turin. On returning to England, he found his book utterly neglected and thrown aside. His *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, printed in 1752, and esteemed by himself beyond measure the most perfect of his writings, came also, to use his own expressions, "unnoticed and unobserved, into the world."

LITTLE depressed by these repeated discouragements, Hume was full of the liveliest and most sanguine expectation of the success that must await his *History of the Stuarts*; and which he confidently trusted would indemnify him for all his disappointments,

disappointments. This work was published in 1754; but the event only proved how vain and illusory is an author's dependence on the opinion of the public. "Miserable was my disappointment—I was assailed," says he, "by one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation: English, Scotch, and Irish, whig and tory, churchman and sectary, free-thinker and religionist, patriot and courtier, united in their rage against the man who had presumed to shed a generous tear for the fate of Charles I. and the Earl of Strafford; and after the first ebullitions of their fury was over, what was still more mortifying, the book seemed to sink into complete oblivion." Attentive and vigilant as Hume was to collect the sentiments of his readers, he could hear of no more than two names, distinguished by rank or letters, with whom his productions had found any favour. These, which seem two odd exceptions, DR. HERRING and DR. STONE, the primates of the English and the Irish church, respectively sent him messages not to be discouraged in his historical pursuits.

THE slender encouragement of these suffrages, failed to sustain his firmness; and had not the war at that time breaking out between Britain and France, opposed such a plan, he tells us himself, that he would have retired into some provincial town

town in the latter kingdom, renounced his native country and name, and resigned himself to the obscurity he had been so long and strenuously, but so vainly, labouring to escape. As the immediate execution of this design was impracticable, and he had made much progress in the prosecution of his historical researches, he resolved at length to rally his courage, and depend on final success from perseverance in his enterprise.

His *History of the House of Tudor*, appeared in 1759; and the public clamour was manifested almost as violently against this, as his former work on the Stuarts. In 1763 he accompanied the Earl of Hertford on his embassy to Paris, where he was welcomed in a manner which seems to have equally pleased and surprised him. "Those," says he in that brief sketch of his life, which demonstrates the modesty of his temper as unequivocally as his other works proclaimed the extent of his faculties, "those who have not seen the strange effects of modes, will never imagine the reception I met at Paris from men and women of all ranks and stations. The more I *replied* from their caresses the more I was loaded with them."

SUCH is the history of Hume's literary successes; and such indeed is the history of every prophet in his own country. Every one, whatever his station  
or

or talents, who has the presumption to see more clearly or profoundly than his neighbours, his fellow-citizens, nay, than his contemporaries; and who aggravates his crime by communicating his discoveries, and endeavouring, from the press or otherwise, to disseminate his knowledge; sets himself up as a mark for general envy and resentment. A writer, even though his merits fall below mediocrity, will find inferiors, all of whom will seize every occasion of revenging their humbled pride on the superiority he has asserted. There will rarely perhaps be wanting persons in our native spot to afford us food when we are hungry, or raiment when we are naked, and to rescue us, when overtaken by misfortune, from the immediate gripe of affliction; but whatever compassion they may entertain for our distresses, they will feel for our honours no sensations but those of jealousy and hatred,

WITH republican impatience of pre-eminent merit, the Ephesians decreed, that if any of their citizens should excel his fellows, he should be exiled into some other state. I would not go so far as to exhort the man who surpasses in merit his equals in rank, to break off all intercourse with them; but by a temporary sequestration from their presence, he might avoid experiencing their injustice and envy; and thus escape those provocations

to hate them, to which he will certainly be exposed by his superiority.

It is one of our most important duties, and most conducive to our happiness, to look with indulgence and complacency on our contemporaries, and not to wish them other than we find them. A generous indignation may, I will admit, be excited, when we hear knaves declaiming on honour and justice; and comparing their paltry and insidious schemes with our fair and uncorrupted ideas of what is truly just, honest, and virtuous. It is almost impossible to restrain the emotions of chagrin and anger which rise in the ingenuous and ardent mind, at an illiberal or perverse judgment on a noble action or an admirable work. But the more natural and excusable these sentiments of indignation may be, the more it is incumbent on us to guard against them; lest, once admitted into the mind, they finally make an entire conquest of its feelings, arm its affections against its fellow-creatures, and turn its very goodness and passion for virtue, into a cynical and disgustful misanthropy.

O THOU, whose character is by rare and precious endowments enhanced above that of others, disgrace not thyself by resenting that invidious temper of thy inferiors, which is their proper homage to thy



thy pre-eminence. But above all, look with compassion and kindness on those who are not misled and corrupted by their own vicious propensities, but in mere ignorance of heart, weakly and credulously follow the cry begun by malice and envy. Confound not innocent reptiles with vipers and scorpions; but hear without anger, nay, learn to disregard the senseless hissings and barkings that every where wait on the heels of transcendent merit. Never oppose thyself to the opinions of such as thou canst not expect to move by reason to conviction. Rather strive to render thyself master of their hearts; and their understandings will then submit to thine without compulsion or resistance.

THE general passion for slander has ever grievously offended the most deserving and excellent men; and perhaps nothing has so much contributed to relax their inclination to social intercourse, and to render them regardless of the esteem and encouragement of their companions and contemporaries. To avoid giving pain to the weak and sickly sight of others by the splendour of their glories, they have voluntarily withdrawn into the shades of retirement; sometimes not without contracting, from their observation of human injustice and uncharitableness, too severe and unforgiving a sense of human depravity. SOLON,  
when

when he could no longer resist the tyranny of **PISISTRATUS**, confined himself within his house. Throwing his armour indignantly into the public way, with the declaration, that he had sufficiently exerted himself in defence of his country's liberty, and assertion of its laws, he devoted his leisure to the composition of the bitterest invectives against the tame and abject servility of the Athenians.

NEVER was there a courtier possessed of manly feelings, who did not wish to escape from the contagious vices which flourish in courts, though to the humility and hardships of the plough. How can such a one observe, without disgust and indignation, the services of the best and greatest men calumniated and blasted by the breath of brainless chamberlains and court-ladies; who are one moment amusing themselves by caressing their parrots and four-footed favourites, and the next by blackening and aspersing every one who seeks fortune and honour by the open and manly road of desert, and not by the crooked and subterraneous path of flattery and intrigue. With what patience can he witness the deceitful, mean, and vicious artifices, with which the goodness of princes is led astray, and their discernment dazzled and blinded? The impositions and artful practices of designing knaves, will extort his indignant censure: yet will he regard, though with a more contemptuous, yet  
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a more painful sensation, the weak and grovelling characters who burst with jealous alarm and envious rage, when they hear their Sovereign address a cordial and approving word to a faithful but independent officer.

DION, the deliverer of Sicily, when attendant on the court of the younger Dionysius, was derided and calumniated, because he did not conform his manners and habits to those of the parasites who composed the servile and luxurious train of the tyrant. They distorted his very virtues into their opposite vices, by an oblique and envious interpretation of them. His serious and manly deportment was represented as a haughty affectation; the noble sincerity with which on all occasions he declared his sentiments, was libelled as the intemperance of an insolent and satirical humour; and, when he fled their frivolous or guilty pleasures, to fortify his mind with the habits of reflection, or the precepts of philosophy, they represented this as a stern and ostentatious reproof of their own *elegant* and *natural* enjoyments.

SUCH false and perverse judgments seem to justify the heart most rich in sensibility and social affection, in occasionally shrinking from society. But it should be our study sedulously to exclude every morose and angry sentiment from the just disregard

disregard which we may feel for the vain opinions of the multitude; and the dislike we must entertain of their unworthy motives. A slight deviation from a temperate love of humanity, will imperceptibly lead into a hatred of mankind. He, who nourishes a severe remembrance of their vices, and encourages a stern contempt for their frailties, who lodges them in his mind, though only as materials for the knowledge of his species, will be apt to hate the species itself, whenever he shall be made the dupe and prey of individuals. Then all his feelings and ideas become tinged with the bile of misanthropy; his jaundiced eye misrepresents every object; and the good and the bad are equally condemned by his perverted judgment. His mind becomes over-run by suspicion, fear, jealousy, revenge, and all the horde of malignant passions. When these have finally accomplished the conquest of his reason, he abhors and disclaims his species. He would become a savage of the desert; or, like ST. HYACINTHE,\* wishes to occupy some uninhabited island; where in solitary safety he may enjoy the unsocial waste, and assert the inviolability of the inhuman shore, by murdering every wretch

\* *St. Hyacinthe* was the son of the celebrated Bossuet, Bishop of Paris; and is himself well known as the author of the entertaining piece, entitled *Chef d'œuvre d'un Inconnu, par le docteur Mathanafus*.

who shall be driven upon it naked, famished, and helpless.

I still shudder at the remembrance of a monster of this description, whom, when in Switzerland, I was occasionally compelled, by the duties of my profession, to visit. This enemy of his brethren, whose sole meditation was how to sow strife and mischief among his neighbours, was not less hideous in his appearance than horrible in his character. Such was the impression of his frightful figure on my imagination, that I never failed to fancy I beheld serpents curling, in the dark, matted knots of his neglected hair. His face was covered with a livid incrustation, which seemed caused by the malignancy no less of his mental than bodily humours. His eyes glared beneath the thicket of his black brows, like the torch of the Furies. He had no appetite nor passion but for the perpetration of mischief; evil of any kind was a luxury and cordial to him. His house was an asylum and rallying-point for all the disorderly, violent, and pernicious spirits in the land; whom he applauded and directed in all their offences against private peace, in all their outrages on public tranquillity. He was the patron of every injustice; of all amiable and deserving persons, the enemy and persecutor; the host and protector of every villain; the register of slander; the circulator of calumny; the advocate  
and

and champion of malice; and the zealous supporter of iniquity, cruelty, and inhumanity.

THIS *Helvetic* Tintor had so completely perverted his nature, that in these abhorred practices, and in these only, he found himself content and easy. While he could glut his infernal wishes with the spectacle of the miseries he spread around him, he lived apparently satisfied with himself, at enmity with, and remote from, every thing worthy and amiable.

LUCIAN's unhappy misanthrope was not without cause for his hatred to mankind; his furious and immitigable hatred to his species, stands extenuated by the unparalleled wrongs which provoked it. When we recollect these, his angry and vengeful invectives scarcely seem unjust or extravagant. "This solitary spot of earth," said he, "shall be my habitation and my grave. I will associate only with the beasts of the field: the sight or name of man shall be as a noisome and malignant stench to me. I abjure and reject all society, friendship, compassion, and humanity. To console the afflicted, to assist the distressed, I will regard as folly and weakness. I will treat every man as a deceiver and robber: I will esteem all intercourse with them contamination; and shun their presence as I would the

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"fangs of adders. I will fence myself against  
 "the intrusion of perfidious and ungrateful man,  
 "by surrounding myself with the solitude of a  
 "howling wilderness. Friends, kindred, country,  
 "are empty sounds or artful snares to trepan and  
 "despoil the unwary and generous. I will not  
 "know their love; I spurn at their applause; I  
 "will repulse their deceitful services; I will have  
 "no friend save myself; I will live alone; and  
 "when I die, commit my body to the savages of  
 "the desert, less inhuman, rapacious, and thank-  
 "less, than those that live in cities. I will be  
 "known only by my scornful loathing of my  
 "species; by my detestation of their vices; my  
 "inexorable and unrelenting hatred of their per-  
 "sons. I will heap upon them all calamities and  
 "mischiefs; I will aggravate and multiply their  
 "curses. If I see my brother perishing in the  
 "fire, and he implores me to extinguish the flames  
 "and preserve him, I will throw into them oil and  
 "pitch, to quicken and irritate their fierceness.  
 "If my father be contending with the violent  
 "waves, and stretch forth his arms to me for  
 "assistance, I will hold his head under the waters;  
 "and secure and finish his destruction."

To this extreme did injustice, the most cruel,  
 ingratitude the basest and most unexpected, added  
 to the most grievous and unmerited wrongs, urge  
 a man,

a man, whose disposition originally teemed with the milk of human gentleness. But there are persons, who with little or no reason to complain of the treatment of the world, nourish a deadly animosity against it; and rejoice in every evil and affliction which extends not its malignancy to them. They have indulged the pleasures of indolence and vice, and are enraged that they have not met with the rewards of industry and virtue. They seek solitude, because they shun the light which only discovers their own shame, and the glory and prosperity of others; and if they quit it, they come forth, not to replenish their exhausted hearts with the joys of their fellow-creatures, but to find subjects of mirth and triumph in the spectacle of their disgraces and miseries.

BUT there is a numerous class of persons, free from the pressure of melancholy, and from all disdain of common characters; unpoisoned by any emotions of vindictive antipathy; untainted by any ungenerous or unsocial feeling; the honour and pride of their species, who love to seclude themselves from society, and devote their hours to uninterrupted communion with those sublime and enlightened minds, which in every age have adorned the history of man, advanced his powers, and increased his happiness.

SOLITUDE thus employed, far from teaching us



to hate or condemn our race, exalts it in our estimation; brings us more intimately acquainted with its virtues and powers; and exhibiting in the finest forms and richest colours the perfections in which its grace and glory consist, animates while it directs us to transplant those charms and honours into ourselves, and extend them among our contemporaries and successors.

To humane and generous spirits retirement is indeed the surest antidote to misanthropy: removed from the observation of vice, they regard the vicious rather with compassion than horror or hatred: intent on correcting the casual deformities and completing the deficiencies of their own characters, they survey the defects, and even depravities of others, without rancour, and their virtues without envy. The faculties of the head and the heart are equally enlarged, enlivened, invigorated, and enfranchised, by the just use and enjoyment of solitude; whose benign assistance has been acknowledged by philosophers, poets, and heroes; by all, in short, who have aspired, by extending their knowledge and improving their talents, to elevate themselves above the ordinary level of humanity. The pomps and luxuries of cities they quitted for the silence and simplicity of gardens, or the solemn gloom of forests: there, screened from the intrusion and interruption of  
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man and his petty occupations and concerns, they lived absorbed in the idea implanted in their own hearts, of what was generous, amiable, and sublime.

DEMOSTHENES for months together confined himself to a subterraneous chamber; where he formed that nervous, impassioned, and resolute eloquence, which rendered him the boast of Athens, and the admiration of the world. The exalted heroes of Greece and Rome divided their attention between arms and arts; they prepared themselves for public action by private and solitary meditation; and owed their splendour in the State to the cultivation of their talents in solitude. JESOME, the glory and support of the rising church, attained to a masculine and energetic eloquence in the solitude of a horrible wilderness; and kindled in that obscurity the genius which afterwards enlightened and dazzled the Christian world. The Druids, when permitted by the duties of their station and offices, retired from the cities of Britain, Germany, and Gaul, into the awful gloom of their sacred forests; where they lived engaged in the study of nature, reflections on man, and speculations on the Divinity. Occupied with these subjects, and the education of the youth of highest promise, they were at once the priests, legislators, counsellors, judges, physicians, philosophers, and tutors of the nations where they resided.

IN *Sans Souci*, where the modern Julian forges the rapid thunderbolts of war, and prepares the works of his immortal mind for the admiration of posterity; where he meditates on the government of his empire, with the same sollicitude and tenderness that a good parent regulates his family; where he spends half the day in reading and answering the petitions and complaints of the meanest of his subjects; and considers how he may employ the riches and resources of the State with advantage in the most permanent and extensive manner; while during the remaining hours he recreates his fatigued spirits with the charms of poetry, or augments his powers and extends his views by the graver researches of philosophy: in that awful retreat reigns a quiet interrupted only by the breath of heaven. I entered the solemn inclosure the first time during the twilight of a winter's evening. I approached the asylum of the hero, and hailed the rays of the taper that shewed where he sat in majesty of thought and contemplation: no guards, no sentinel, detained my steps by suspicious interrogations. There I saw none of the pomp "wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;" but walked free and unchecked, except by reverential awe, through the modest, unostentatious, and humble retreat of the wonderful man.

KINGS and philosophers, heroes and sages, all  
characters

characters who aspire to magnanimous virtues and comprehensive wisdom, have profited by the lessons and discipline of Solitude; and few have there been of uncommon capacity and rare talents, who have not displayed in their works and actions a votive tablet to the general influence of the retirement they cultivated.

THE passion for solitude is frequently a desire to make ourselves known to persons with whom we have no immediate acquaintance, and to whom we wish to extend the knowledge of our names and characters. Ah, how seldom do those whose labours have instructed and delighted the world, collect much pleasure from the sympathy and kindness of their companions! What in another kingdom or province is welcomed and applauded by the best understandings and hearts, is censured, reviled, and persecuted, on the spot where it was composed, and intended most to shed its benefits. Those who perhaps overlooked, or even ventured to encourage the merits of the deserving man, till they were fully manifested, then glance the oblique rays of envy, and level the poisoned shafts of calumny, at his conduct and principles. PETRARCH afforded a striking example of this malevolence: "Scarcely," says he, "did my fame lift itself above the crowd of ordinary reputations, before every one's tongue or pen was brandished  
" against

“ against me ; my friends converted into deadly  
“ enemies ; envy pursued me into every refuge ;  
“ the populace, to whom my poems were as familiar  
“ as the psalms to a chaunter, took delight in  
“ trampling upon my honour ; and those who  
“ best knew me were the most eager to stigmatise  
“ and mangle my character.” A due dependence on his own value will however support the Student under this discouraging treatment : consoled by the sense of the different return he has deserved from the world, he will forget its injustice ; and inured to live without its love, find nothing in its malice to dismay or afflict him : he will look to other ages for his recompense. He who like Petrarch appeals from the injurious usage of his countrymen and contemporaries to a more impartial and generous posterity, will find hearts in every age responsive to his feelings, and eager to recompense him largely for the love so well merited and so unjustly withheld.

GERMANY has probably a multitude of powerful minds, whose genius is blasted by the baleful fogs of stupidity and envy that settle around them, contracting their powers and poisoning their peace. Fatigued and overpowered with obstinate and malignant opposition, how many of their virtuous designs are they not compelled to leave unfinished ?  
and

and with what frequent dependence does the least unfortunate of them frequently exclaim? "I live  
 " and feel my heart distend with the gentlest and  
 " best affections. I strive to injure none and to  
 " benefit all within the compass of my faculties;  
 " and yet my designs are counteracted; my motives misrepresented; my character defamed;  
 " my person hated!" Some few indeed, the hardy tone of whose minds no adversity can subdue or relax, assume the greater courage and determination to accomplish their plans, in proportion as they feel themselves inclosed by dulness, barbarism, and meanness. WIELAND, whom the Muses and Graces have peculiarly adopted for their own, formed himself in a small town of Suabia; the lonely and obscure *Biberach*, to be the delight and glory of his country: there, amid ignorance and rudeness, he cultivated and attained the art with which he has succeeded to unite the beautiful and graceful spirit of ancient poetry, with the liveliness of modern wit, and the severity of modern philosophy.

WHERE did the most celebrated sages and statesmen labour to produce their greatness? Did the Stagyrte compose or meditate his profound systems in the ante-chambers of Philip? or were the sublime theories of his master conceived among the riotous banquets of the Sicilian tyrant? Like  
 other

other great men, their predecessors and followers; they sought the tranquillity and freedom of Solitude as the best laboratory of their schemes and discoveries. LEIBNITZ regularly spent every summer at a little garden he possessed in Hanover. Of those Statesmen who in modern days have enlightened or benefited mankind, not one was formed in the foppery of balls, or over the laborious trifling of cards: not one of them acquired the profound sagacity or sublime policy, so necessary to their situations, in the circles of the gay and magnificent.

THIS long catalogue of the numerous causes which conduct to Solitude, is closed by Religion and Fanaticism. The former leads to the serenity and quiet of retirement, from the purest and noblest considerations, the best propensities, and the finest energies. It is the passion of the strongest and best regulated minds. The latter is a rebellion against nature; a violation and perversion of reason; a renunciation of virtue; the folly and vice of narrow and oblique understandings; produced by a misapprehension of the Deity, and an ignorance of themselves.

CONSTITUTION and temperament have a great, though not always visible influence, in producing or confirming most of these inclinations to solitude:

tude; but their action varies in each individual. A vehement and obstinate averſion from ſociety is generally the reſult of diſordered organs. A tone of nerves, too quick or too dull, governs our whole being; and by the force and conſtancy with which it acts, modifies our paſſions and frequently decides our characters and conduct. We are thus rendered incapable of the duties, or inſenſible to the pleaſures of Society; and an antipathy to company and eagernels to avoid it, are generally the final, where they are not the firſt effects, of mental or bodily languor and irritability.

THE love of Solitude in all its degrees, from a ſimple rational inclination to a frantic and pernicious paſſion, might doubtleſs be traced to other ſources; but this would be rather a reſearch of curioſity than of moral and uſeful inveſtigation. The grand laws of ſenſation and reaſoning have been indicated, which by their uſual or increaſed operation, give birth and nurture to this propenſity; which, under ſome circumſtances, abounding with the moſt important benefits to man, is, when indiſcreetly ſought, or obſtinately perſiſted in, fruitful of the mightieſt miſchiefs. To exhibit theſe latter is more peculiarly our preſent purpoſe; in conſtrast to what has been ſtated, in a former volume, as to the advantages which might reſult from a well-regulated love of retirement.



## CHAPTER THE THIRD.

THE MISCHIEVOUS INFLUENCE OF SOLITUDE IN  
PARTICULAR INSTANCES.

**O**F the inducements to Solitude many do not originate or terminate in temperate reason : neither do they uniformly operate to foster and strengthen the good dispositions of the heart, and prepare it for a courageous and patient discharge of its duties. Even in common habits of retirement some evil effects are to be guarded against ; but in all extreme and obstinate detachments from society, the dangers that beset the mind are innumerable and almost irresistible.

ALL the defects of the recluse, however, must not be imputed to the influence of his lonely situation. The seeds of numerous vices are sown in the character among its first habits and passions ; and of these while Solitude represses or eradicates some it feeds and enlivens others. If the heart be pure, the disposition cheerful, and the understanding cultivated, temporary sequestrations from general or even private intercourse, will improve the virtues of the mind and conduce to happiness ; but when  
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the soul is corrupted, and myriads of depraved images and wishes swarm in the tainted imagination, Solitude only serves to confirm and aggravate the evil; and by keeping the mind free to brood over its rank and noxious conceptions, becomes the midwife and nurse of its unnatural and monstrous suggestions.

It is necessary to observe, and partially, at least, to experience the benign as well as injurious influence of seclusion under various circumstances, and on different minds, or in different states of mind, before we can pronounce with confidence in what cases it will prove propitious and salutary, in what pernicious and hostile. Retreat even from promiscuous commerce with the world is a renunciation of many advantages; but what advantages are not possessed by a judicious and well-regulated privacy? In tracing its virtuous operations I could willingly remain silent over its ill effects; had my intention been to compose not an impartial character, but a romantic panegyric of retirement.

In solitary inactivity man is like a standing water, that stagnates by total rest into impurity and corruption. Continual indolence is not less fatal to the health, both of the mind and body, than incessant and extravagant exertion: while the evils attendant

attendant upon it are as much more hopeless of remedy, as it is more difficult to rise from long repose into action than to drop from action into repose.

EVERY member and finew of the frame sinks into lassitude and debility, if labour be not seasonably interchanged with rest: nor is the mind less susceptible of fatigue and relaxation, unless relieved by a change of its objects, as well as by the suspension of its exertions. Solitude therefore soon becomes burthensome and insupportable to him who does not possess the means of varying his contemplations, and who carries not within himself the materials of amusement: he sinks into indifference, languor, and uneasiness, when the passion subsides which urged him to seclusion. It then becomes necessary for him to seek the conversation of mild and agreeable friends, that he may restore his slackened vigour, replenish his exhausted spirits, and retrieve his relish for calm exertion, and sedate enjoyment.

THERE is no less hazard that a too constant Solitude may render the character monotonous, rigid, inflexible, and unfit for the service or enjoyment of society. The opinions of one removed from the commerce of mankind become stationary and unalterable; his faculties do not readily follow or  
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accompany the progress of the mind which takes place in others ; and while his own prejudices are extravagantly endeared to him, he teaches himself to despise all who oppose them ; unaccustomed to investigate any reasonings but his own, which seldom call forth dissent or disapprobation, he is no longer able to balance the weight of contrary arguments. One of the greatest advantages which the mind derives from a promiscuous intercourse with the world, is the docility and correctness which arise from the recurrence of frequent opposition ; this produces a candid investigation of truth, and liberality of disposition ; the heart expands, and the intellect becomes bolder and more enlightened.

SOLITUDE is dangerous, as it tends to accustom us to our own imperfections and foibles, and leads us to excuse, nay, sometimes to esteem them, while it encourages an undue confidence in our powers and opinions. Persons of rank and fortune, who reside much on their estates, where they are surrounded by their inferiors and dependents, too often habituate themselves to such a haughty and rugged assertion of their own wills and sentiments, that equal conversation is impossible ; and the transaction of any kind of business with them is disgusting to an independent and manly spirit. PLATO has said that pride and obstinacy were the inevitable

inevitable consequences of a solitary life : this observation is frequently verified in such as dwell in retirement unacquainted with the opinions of others ; whose errors, encountering no opposition, establish a despotism over their reason. Such persons disdain and repulse correction, and conceive themselves endowed with unerring judgment, only because their opinions, received without examination, have never been brought to the test of controversy ; and because their will, however unreasonable, has always been an undisputed law with their menials and labourers.

Though in proportion as the mind habituates itself to depend upon its own strength, and to actuate its own movements, it renders its happiness independent and secure, enlivens its powers, and multiplies its resources : yet these advantages are sometimes overbalanced or destroyed by the stubborn indocility, haughty arrogance, boorish incivility, or rugged and unaccommodating temper which takes place in the rigid and solitary recluse.

Men of studious and scholastic habits rarely escape entirely uninjured by the operation of their beloved solitude ; as they are seldom sufficiently attentive to qualify it by social and liberal intercourse, either with each other or the world in general. Many literary characters either live wholly

Wholly retired, or associate only with persons whose manners, habits, and pursuits, too closely corresponding with their own, afford them no admonition against their errors. By this means they grow strange to the common occupations, pleasures, interests, and customs of the community of which they are members; and with a too partial attachment to the objects of their own attention and cultivation, treat the pursuits of others with unjust disdain.

In one of the most polite and refined cities of Germany, the pulpit has been made the vehicle of salutary advice to men of letters: they were earnestly exhorted to guard against the failings which usually adhere to their character, and are the common result of their professional habits. They were advised to avoid that unsocial reserve of deportment, that contumacious scorn of the illiterate, from which the scholar is rarely exempt: they were solicited to mingle with their fellow-citizens, to consider their maxims and conduct with liberality, and their ignorance with lenity: to teach science and truth rather by gentleness and persuasion, than by exposing error to shame or ignominy: to render their knowledge more accessible to the simple and unlearned: to descend to the level of inferior understandings, so as to open the portals of science by plain and unaffected instruction. They were con-

jured to bear with indulgence dulness and want of comprehension in the unenlightened; and with patience the opposition of the perverse: to be willing to receive instruction themselves, as well as to impart it to others with simplicity and modesty; and finally to regard without contempt the employments, pleasures, and sentiments, that prevail among other classes of men.

LEARNING and Wisdom are by no means synonymous terms, though conceited pedants are in general desirous of confounding them: they are frequently the very reverse of each other, and indeed almost always so, when the possessor of learning attaches to it an undue value and importance. Strange as it may appear, nothing is more common than for men of erudition to owe their extravagant respect for themselves to their total inexperience and ignorance of every genuine form of human merit and excellence; the knowledge of which latter is not so surely or so frequently to be gathered from books, as from other unselected efforts and productions of the human faculties. Many who pride themselves on their love of science, are wholly absorbed in idle and unprofitable studies; in such as contract the heart and even impoverish the understanding and impair the faculties: habituated to confine all their attention to these, and to interest themselves about

no other subjects, they at last come to despise every object out of the range of their own pursuits. Many have been so long accustomed to declaim and dictate in the pulpit or the school, uncontradicted and unanswered, that they are confused and utterly at a loss when they appear in the world and find their dogmas contested. Others, from continually poring over obsolete and exploded books, acquire sentiments and habits so foreign to the age in which they live, and even so unnatural in themselves; or fabricate from their own native or acquired folly, systems of opinion and action so ridiculous, as well as unfashionable; that when they appear in society they are hunted back with derision, like owls that trespass upon day-light. Many too, grow so bloated with overweening arrogance in the contemplation of their imaginary pre-eminence, that in their intercourse with the world, they can neither moderate nor conceal their vanity: at every step they violate and shock the feelings of their companions, whom, instead of aiding and directing with wholesome counsel and instruction, they confound with pedantry, and disgust with insulting ostentation: by this means dishonouring those rare accomplishments, which, when properly employed, confer dignity on their possessors, but thus abused, only serve to cover them with disgrace.

PLATO was so wholly free from this vice of in-



ferior minds, that it was not by casual intercourse any one could discover in him that towering imagination and almost divine intelligence, which rendered him an object of curiosity and wonder to the whole of the then civilised world ; and which have justly secured to him the admiration of all succeeding ages. A foreigner who had undertaken a long voyage, in order to become personally acquainted with this great philosopher, on desiring his host to introduce him to the extraordinary character, heard with astonishment, that the unaffected, affable companion, with whom he had repeatedly conversed in public, without remarking any thing distinguished in him, but his urbanity, cheerfulness, and pleasantry, was the identical PLATO, the sublime and stupendous genius, to observe and study whose character and deportment he had sought the distant soil of Athens. The contemplative and sequestered life of this uncommon man had stolen nothing from his talents for public intercourse ; and he retained all the unassuming ease and familiar amenity so frequently lost in seclusion. Nor is this instance singular : all the benefits of Solitude, with equal exemption from its usual injuries, have been enjoyed by two eminent German philosophers of the present age ; the sage MENDELSSOHN, and the amiable GARVE.

HAVING thus stated the general failings of  
scholars,

Scholar, it is but fair, on the other hand, to observe, that mere men of the world are apt to expect too much versatility and promptitude of manner from the studious; to repress their efforts, for obtaining a familiar and social deportment, by deriding their failures with triumphant severity. They are therefore driven back into their former scholastic reserve and academic austerity, by the little indulgence allowed them for mistakes and indecorums, which arise from their inexperience in the practice of polished life, and their ignorance of its customs. Men who have dedicated their energies almost wholly to scientific or literary researches, and have had few opportunities of cultivating the duties or pleasures of polite intercourse, ought not to be called on at once for that spontaneous promptitude of thought, that vivacity of humour, and facility of manners, which render mixed companies so agreeable, but which are only to be obtained by practice and experience. Is it to be reasonably expected, that he whose life has been spent among books, should apprehend and divine the nature of familiar occurrences? should anticipate the constant or incidental operation of custom, prejudice, and fashion? should meet the capricious movements of inclination and passion? should contribute to the ease of others; or be so much at his own, as him whose sole employment has been to study the views and tempers

of all around him ; and who has been in the continual practice of participating and assisting their pleasures ? The world itself is guilty of perpetuating the incapacity of the studious to assume its manners, and excel in its exercises ; by discouraging their attempts, and deriding their ill-successes. No inhumanity and injustice could exceed that of the Swedish courtiers, who diverted themselves with the painful embarrassment of MEIBOM and NAUDE, two celebrated writers on the music and dances of antiquity, when they were desired by the famous CHRISTINA, the one to sing and the other to dance, for the entertainment of their *noble* companions,

Nor was the excessive ridicule with which the French coquets and petits-maitres, insulted the blunder of the celebrated mathematician, NICOLE, less repugnant to humanity and reason. A Parisian lady, actuated by the affectation common among persons of rank in that capital, had, solely on account of the reputation which NICOLE had obtained from his profound science in the doctrine of curves, invited him to a grand entertainment. The geometrician who had never before been present at so sumptuous a repast, and who was totally unused to receive civilities from persons of such elegance and dignity, neither knew how to contain, nor express his satisfaction. On taking his

his leave, having exhausted himself in declarations of his grateful sense of the honour conferred on him, he crowned his compliments, by the assurance, "That he would never forget the pretty little eyes of his generous entertainer." "That was but an ungallant and awkward compliment from so great a man," observed a friend to him, as they were going down stairs; "for ladies are not fond of being told they have little eyes." NICOLE, surprised at the intimation of having failed in politeness, or committed an impropriety toward his gracious hostess, resolved, at all events, to repair or expiate it, and immediately returned to the company. There, with great humility, entreating pardon for his rudeness, he declared his full persuasion, that a noble lady must be offended by the imputation of any kind of littleness; and vowed that he had never beheld "Such fine large eyes, such fine large lips, such fine large hands, such a fine large lady all over."

THE Student, secluded, by his peculiar pursuits, from the usual resorts and paths of life, frequently enters into the world at an advanced age. Some, discouraged by the neglect that marks their introduction to society, or deterred by the ridicule to which their learned uncouthness exposes them, shrink back into their retirement; despairing of ever acquiring such habits as may render them capable of

of social intercourse with the gay, the elegant, and luxurious; and thus at once abandon, for ever, those scenes to which a little more resolution and perseverance would have familiarized them. Others, finding the world as little agreeable to their tastes and opinions, as they are to those of the world, renounce its commerce, as a measure equally desirable for both. Some, who, perhaps, conceive they shall be looked on as having transfused all their mind into their compositions; and therefore be regarded and rejected with disdain, like empty bottles or squeezed oranges, will not encounter with their presence a society, to which it is not expected they can any longer afford instruction or entertainment. Many are there, also, who decline company, because they observe, with contempt, how rarely the most numerous assemblies contain any persons capable of just and manly reflection; and that the vain and frivolous rise in insurrection, as it were, against every word that carries in it either energy and meaning.

For these, among other causes, many characters, distinguished for their genius and knowledge, though ambitious to instruct and delight mankind, too readily forego the reciprocal benefits of the social circle. But this is no trifling loss to them. The mind will generally feel a deficiency, if to its literary acquisitions there be not added the

the observation and experience of living manners and passions. Without these it fees not the end to which its benevolent exertions should be addressed; nor the means and instruments, by which to attain them; neither is it likely ever to acquire that fine sense in morals, and exquisite sensibility of taste, which seldom fails to be caught by a vigorous and correct mind from the conversation of various characters, and an intimate disorimination of manners. The best and sagest moralists have ever sought to mix with mankind; to review every class of life; to study the virtues, and detect the vices, by which each are peculiarly marked. It has been by founding their disquisitions and essays on men and manners, upon actual observation, that they have owed much of the success, with which their virtuous efforts have been crowned.

THE society of the great, the gay, the informed, nay, of the mean, the solemn, and the uninstructed affords a continual criterion whereby to judge of the ideas we may have entertained: and at the same time offers new accessions to them; it may be employed by the studious as a means of criticism on their own works, since they may thus incidentally advance and discuss opinions before they venture on the irrevocable step of committing them to the judgment of the public.

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By the experiment that may be made on every one, learned or ignorant, with whom we hold discourse, we may not only bring to a touchstone the truth of our tenets, but learn how we may best elucidate and express them; and remove the impediments which might otherwise oppose their being favourably received, or assented to. Many, who have stored their minds with science and philosophy, and strengthened their faculties by meditation, attempt to enlighten the world from the obscurity of solitude; but having lived to themselves only, inattentive to the rules of ordinary life, and ignorant of the necessities and obligations that result from its various forms, these inexperienced sages know not what objects to select for displaying their knowledge; nor through what medium to convey their instructions. Unskilled in the manner of framing their address, they shock and repel, when they would wish to conciliate and engage; they command where they should persuade; and, on the contrary, where they might, with propriety and effect, employ the imperative language of assured truth and confident justice, they surrender their advantage, and betray their cause by a tone of humility and indecision.

WHEN the mind is once smitten with the love of science, and becomes eager to urge its powers  
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to their utmost stretch, it usually resigns itself without reserve to the means of gratifying this ambition. The opportunity afforded by retirement to promote these means gives it a hold on the sincere student, from which he is unable, and indeed unwilling to release himself. If he is ever prevailed on to leave the quiet and freedom of his beloved privacy, at the solicitation of friendship, to mingle with society, it is by a painful violence to his inclinations, which prevents him from participating in the pleasures of the novel scene, to learn its lessons, or obtain its honours. Suddenly transported into the midst of a crowd, whose interests, feelings, and prejudices, variously modified by chance and condition, agree among themselves only in differing altogether from his, he is bewildered in the strange intricacy and complication of views which he can neither comprehend, nor co-operate with. To him the confined and temporary honours of the festive party offer small attraction; his more extended ambition grasping at the admiration of ages, feels as faintly prompted to exhibit its excellence in such contracted circles, as the comedian does to exert his talent before empty theatres. The elevation of mind produced by the grandeur of his designs, compensates to him the want of that credit and respect, for the acquisition of which it incapacitates him; full of the fame he hopes to possess in future



future ages, he is indifferent to the estimation made of him by his contemporaries, and disdains the practice of those arts, which usually secure present reputation and fortune.

HENCE it is that many learned and ingenious men, capable of improving all who might associate with them, and deserving general esteem and encouragement, wear away an obscure and solitary life in the unprofitable worship of truth and science: while hundreds, who have exerted their modicum of sense and information merely to contribute to the immediate, and perhaps, sordid convenience of the indolent and luxurious, are loaded with opulence, and treated with the regard due only to those who instruct the ignorance, or purify the morals of mankind.

OFTEN have I reflected with indignation and surprise on the fate of men, who though endowed with every quality to add to the happiness, engage the affections, command the respect, and merit the gratitude of Society; though formed to please and shine among the elegant and great, and adapted to support and adorn the proudest offices, remain immured in poverty and neglect; while honours and emoluments are engrossed by hereditary dunces; or by knaves, who have raised themselves

themselves from the dregs of society through mean compliances and dishonest artifices.

As some palliation of the contempt with which scholars are in general treated by men of business, it must be allowed that solitude, study, and philosophy, in fact, disqualify a man for the practice of active life. The penetrating sagacity, and ready self-command which enable the mind to decide its conduct in the dangerous conjunctures and delicate intricacies of human affairs, are not in general the produce of philosophy, nor to be acquired by solitary meditation. This habit of intellect is directly the reverse of the cautious and slow development of ideas, the long investigation of causes, the nice comparison, the alternate and irresolute balancing between conviction and uncertainty, to which the thoughtful philosopher accustoms himself in the secluded and placid leisure of solitude. To succeed in the bustle of the world we must be sudden and rapid without precipitancy, firm without obstinacy, supple without laxness, and always confident, bold and persevering. It is a happiness of conjecture, rather than an intuitive judgment of propriety, which guides through the storms and darkness of public difficulty. This method, indeed, conducts to innumerable errors, which the philosopher would escape

escape by his more circumspect and timid process; but it is the only mode of approach to fortune, success and honour, in the sudden and shifting scenes of active life.

NEITHER is it easy in total seclusion to retain that constant flow of good spirits, and consequent good humour, which when combined seldom fail to engage the affections of society to the frivolous, and their indulgence, and even partiality to the dishonest. The want of this power to set our companions at their ease, and contribute to their entertainment will exclude the man of highest genius from the love, and almost from the attention of the world; which will not afford its respect to him, who has not cultivated its favour; and which values more the slightest effort to consult its immediate gratification, than the most laborious and arduous services rendered to its remote happiness.

A VARIOUS and liberal intercourse with mankind is also necessary to reconcile us to the peculiarities of individuals; and to teach us to bear with temper manners, opinions and principles, opposite to our own. If, like SOCRATES and WIELAND, we have the art of extracting from philosophy all it contains of complacency, kindness and indulgence; if we succeed in separating

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from it all that is harsh, repulsive, and unsocial, while we participate in its virtues we assist in extending them. An excellent critic, my contemporary and countryman, in his remarks on the life and genius of FRANKLIN, observes that the writings of that great man never wear that pomposity, nor exhibit that parade of erudition, which so frequently incumber and obstruct other authors in their attempts to convey knowledge. Presented by him, the most abstract principles are rendered familiar; they surprise us in the relation of pleasant incidents, in facetious observations and adventures; or they win upon our hearts, and introduce themselves to our reason in the interesting occurrences, and communications of friendship. Thus Fancy accompanies and assists Reason in the researches of science and morals; the affections sustain and enliven it; the attention is perpetually relieved by a variety of images which prevent all fatigue or disgust. This easy and engaging perspicuity, this unaffected and persuasive familiarity of manner, reign and charm in every part of Franklin's works, and engage the heart of every reader.

A PATIENT and conceding forbearance is indispensable to render the intercourse of more enlightened minds, with such as are still obscured  
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by ignorance, and contracted by prejudice, useful, or even supportable. The Sage cannot hope to correct the errors of the ignorant but by long enduring their perverseness. By exercise alone can he learn to unravel the sophistry of artful vice, and subdue the obstinacy of passion. He may acquire his extraordinary endowments in solitude; but he cannot there be instructed how to use them: Before he can teach the world with success he must be taught by it to view the follies and vices of his species without scorn or anger, as necessary results of human infirmity; to treat them with lenity and gentleness, and with kindness to avoid shocking and exasperating those whom he despairs of amending. The truly humane and benevolent character never suffers his superiority, however great, to become oppressive to others; he exacts no peculiar attention to his own opinions, he never refuses it to those of others; like SOCRATES, at the very moment he is imparting instruction to those with whom he converses, he will appear to receive it from them. "Kindness," says *Goethe*, "is the golden chain by which the world is held together, and it may be moved and managed with a finger." Every one who has had the opportunity of conversing with that great man, must have perceived how cautiously, in his discourse, he veils with a courteous amenity the mightiness

mightiness of his genius, and exchanges for endearing mildness the ceaseless attention and indefatigable activity of his private hours.

SURELY we should always be greeted with complacency and affection, if we were earnest to treat every one with candour and openness of manner, and to receive them with the indulgence due to human nature; yet though there is no situation of life wherein the friendship and assistance of others are not needful to our safety and welfare, how few are there who condescend by proper and necessary compliances to gain themselves a right to expect and require those attentions in their turn. How can that man hope for the love of others who is ever intent to exalt himself by depressing them? who examines every word, every feeling, every look of his own, fearful lest their expression should betray the poverty and meanness of his soul; while he stands watchful to arrest every trivial oversight or indiscretion, that in innocence or ignorance of heart may escape the inadvertence of his companions; or regards with repining envy every generous thought and impressive word that may do them honour; who, surrounded by his associates, neighbours, and kindred, remains suspicious, alarmed and guarded, as if encompassed with the bitterest enemies; and who, instead of expanding with the ingenuous

boldness of affection, shuts himself up in the jealous reserve of timid hostility.

AN unbounded capacity of intense and durable delight is afforded by the aptitude and readiness of the heart to unfold and communicate itself. Every one feels an eagerness to unbosom himself to the man from whom he hopes to experience a return of confidence, candid indulgence, and generous approbation. The loudest clangor of fame, the acclamations of the public, the hard-earned suffrage of contemporaries and rivals, cannot impart a joy equal to that, which delightfully thrills the exulting and sympathizing heart when it can say, "In this mourner I have awakened  
" trust, hope and comfort; I have rescued this  
" breaking heart from desperation—Into this  
" wounded soul I have poured the balm of suc-  
" cour and encouragement." But to perform these we must have learnt to recommend ourselves to the affections of our brethren. An art which the learned seldom succeed, in their studious solitude, to acquire; and which they too commonly disdain to practise; yet is it more efficacious to ennoble the sentiments, and exalt the intellect than that curious research after originality, which is sometimes as eagerly pursued, as if truth suffered decay, and needed the recommendation of novelty.

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THAT confidence in himself, which man, in the independence of a well-employed Solitude, may derive from the exertion of his faculties, though it may render him a free investigator, and an intrepid assertor of truth, has this inconvenience; that it renders him rigidly austere, and haughtily supercilious; a temper of mind, than which nothing more surely disqualifies him for engaging and retaining the regard of his superiors, the love of his equals, or the respect of his inferiors.

HE who can entertain a friendship and affection for such only as are contented at all times to listen to the proclamations of his vanity; to applaud, and be amazed at, the prodigies of his wit and sagacity; and who never presume to contradict the peremptoriness of his opinions, is himself utterly unworthy of all respect, friendship, or regard. What numbers, distinguished for science and talent, who parade with the affectation of sensibility, and overflow with the expression of smiling benevolence, as long as their love is not called on to exert itself, are yet deaf to the appeals of those, most sincerely and generously attached to them, and turn, regardless, from their distresses, because they have not accompanied them in every extravagance of conjecture, nor implicitly adopted their subtle and visionary systems? Those wretched sops of literature, who always bear about them

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their latest composition, and are never without the complimentary letters they have received from foreign critics, which they are eager and importunate to read, on all occasions, render themselves troublesome and hateful wherever they come: their approach is dreaded like the visitation of pestilence or famine. Let every youth of real genius shun the false ambition that is ever seeking to gorge its vanity with the unwholesome gratifications of continual applause; and which, when it happens to succeed, serves only to provoke general dislike, and render him the object of scorn and contempt.

To these mean and unworthy arts, the studious seclusion of the Scholar may present a grand and venerable contrast. It is the invidious pedant alone, who sits in his study, solitary, unsocial, gloomy, and splenetic, or seeks to divert himself by criticising, deriding, and reviling the merits of his rivals. But calm, happy, and honourable, is the life of him, who, devoted to the cultivation of his own intellect, and employed in forming and directing the taste and character of his age, can look on his equals without jealousy; his superiors with admiration and affection; and the world, whom he instructs, with indulgence and love; who, supported by true internal greatness and elevation, needs not the assistance of pitiful raillery, or unmanly satire, to increase his importance, and

Sustain his dignity; whose soul never relaxes into supineness and melancholy; whose faculties experience no remission of activity, nor find any intellectual labour tedious or disgusting; who regards his profession as the grand and universal means of beneficence to mankind, and therefore perseveres in it with cheerfulness and conscious dignity; who, happy in the use and enjoyment of his own powers, is not sensible of any loss in his absence from society; whose stores of knowledge, and capacity of mind, continually enlarge, insuring him increasing success and satisfaction; who elucidates whatever he explores; who is equally delighted to accomplish his own noble plans, and to promote those of others; and finally, who regards his competitors in science and letters, only as brothers and fellow-labourers in the same laudable pursuits.

SUCH venerable and happy characters are numerous in Europe, both in and out of academies and colleges; and their example should restrain us from being too severe in general declamations against the contracted and unsocial life of the Student. On the whole, however, we must allow that there are certain cases in which Solitude can scarcely fail to produce a tribe of prejudices and absurdities; nay, even to engender some vices. It cannot be otherwise than detrimental to the

peace, ease, and temper of him, who without the strong and steady impulse of a great passion, shuts himself up in a seclusion, where, day and night, he chains his reluctant mind to the contemplation of some uninteresting and ungrateful subject. If it will sometimes contract the mind, and harden the manners, it will not unfrequently contaminate the morals, and lead to practices at once injurious and dishonourable to the character. Evils, even frightful in number and magnitude, mark its destructive influence, where its austerity is neither counteracted nor restrained by occasional intercourse with mankind. When we scrutinise its calamitous operation in the cloister and the desert, we shall revolt with horror from the lamentable and hateful spectacle; and acknowledge ourselves fully persuaded, that, if the proper condition of man does not consist in a promiscuous and dissipated commerce with the world, still less does he fulfil the duties of his station, by a savage and stubborn renunciation of their society.

## CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

## THE ILL EFFECTS OF SOLITUDE ON THE IMAGINATION.

**MEN** of extraordinary characters, and actuated by strange and uncommon passions, have shrunk from the pleasures of the world into joyless gloom and desolation. In savage and dreary deserts they have lived a solitary and destitute life, subjecting themselves to voluntary self-denials and mortifications almost incredible; sometimes exposed in nakedness to the chilling blasts of the winter cold, or the scorching breath of summer's heat, till their brains, distempered by the joint operation of tortured sense and overstrained imagination, swarmed with the wildest and most frantic visions.

WHATEVER is extraordinary, moves, agitates, and overwhelms us in the first moments of surprise and astonishment; but its enchantment vanishes before the eye of steady and firm reason, when she examines its apparent effects, and explores its latent causes. What at first appeared wonderful, then ceases to be supernatural. The hermit, ANTONY, in his gloomy and painful Solitude, was the dupe of his inflamed imagination, and the prey of his  
rebellious

rebellious senses. His nerves were irritated, his blood combustible, his mind was full of wild and riotous desires. In this lawless tumult of the senses, he conceived that BEELZEBUB appeared to him in the form of a beautiful woman, and tempted him to acts of sin, with wanton gestures, inflammatory caresses, and seductive and endearing words. But this captivating fiend was only a dream of his dis-tempered fancy, which ministered to his luxurious desires; and presented to him, with unnatural force and vivacity, the shadows of those gratifications of which he panted for the reality.

SOLITUDE acts with continual and mighty force on the imagination, whose empire over the mind is almost always superior to that of the judgment. The latter is, by nature, rather a controlling than an impelling power; while the former, if unrestrained, hurries forward the will and faculties with irresistible violence. The faculty of Judgment demands a distinctness and certainty of objects, and prompts to a scrupulous examination of them, which cools the ardour of desire, and abates the vehemence of action; while Fancy stays not to disperse the obscurity of its conceptions, to compare their contrarieties, to substantiate their reality, but embraces, with eager fondness, every pleasing and flattering image, and pursues its guidance with the most passionate earnestness and impetuosity. The  
power

power of Judgment is displayed in selecting what is true, and prefaging what is probable; but Imagination exults in embodying appearances invisible to Reason; investing them with the authority, and paying to them the homage due only to Truth. Though, like Memory, it is conversant only with the repetition of actual impressions, it distinguishes itself from that faculty, by variously combining, enlarging, and enlivening the subjects of its power. It is in the compounding and modifying the materials of thought, that we peculiarly acknowledge the intervention and operation of Fancy.

BUT caprice, enthusiasm, and superstitious extravagance, are not the inmates of Solitude only. Every place and condition offers us the choice between wisdom and folly; and unhappily, in all, the human mind is most partial to what is least worthy of it. Some general observations on the effects of Solitude will shew in what instances I consider it detrimental to the imagination, and explain the process by which its wholesome influence is perverted, by an obstinate and immoderate exercise, to the generation of extravagance, delirium, and madness.

IMAGINATION, say the metaphysicians, is only recorded sensation; but is it not frequently rather an arbitrary and erroneous combination of recollections,

tions, which, though true in themselves, are false in their application, with faithful and actual impressions? A child, whose blood suspends its circulation in any member, exclaims, that needles are pricking him, in the sincere persuasion, from the nature of the feeling, that it could be produced by no other cause. In this instance, as in innumerable others, the sensation is real, but the deduction is fallacious. In every case of mental illusion, however extraordinary, the fancy has, perhaps, started from some fact of an equivocal character, from which, mistaking its connections and dependencies, it deviates into a train of consequences, each of which, more remote from the occasion that gave them rise, hurries it further into error. Still it carries along with it the sentiment of belief, naturally impressed by the original sensation; and as it is not easy, when the exertion of Imagination is peculiarly lively and forcible, to distinguish its impressions from those of Sense and Reason, so it is not wonderful that it should succeed, when seconded by the passions, to exercise the powers, enjoy the privileges, and in fine, fully invest itself with the character of its rivals. Yet, notwithstanding the facility with which the mind confounds the respective action of these faculties, are we to assert, as some philosophers have done, the identity or equal fidelity of representation in the two operations; when it is evident, that in one case,

we conform to the laws and procedure of nature, and advance toward realizing our pre-conceptions; while in the other, we transport ourselves far out of her reign, and subject ourselves to disappointments the most painful, and mistakes the most dangerous?

INNUMERABLE are the erroneous and wild conclusions, which branch out of actual sensations and impressions faithfully conveyed by the organs. The Imagination receives every impulse with promptitude and avidity, and obeys it with eagerness. It acts, and is acted upon in its turn. It pours in crowds of foreign ideas; reconciles, or overlooks their incongruities; silences the remonstrances of reason, and animates its favourite images with all the fire of the passions. Thus reinforced, what is there in the mind that can arrest or withstand its influence? It hurries away the whole soul, and either exalts it to the generous and enlightened fervour of enthusiasm; precipitates it into the frenzy of mystic extravagance; or goads it into the ungovernable fury of fanaticism.

ENTHUSIASM is a lively and transporting effervescence of the soul, roused by the contemplation of some object, which, by its novelty awakens attention; by its truth and grandeur dilates the fancy and excites the passions; and prompts, while  
it



it empowers, to daring and extraordinary efforts. The mind when inspired and actuated by a just enthusiasm, does not abandon reason or nature; it only soars above the level, along which it usually moves, exploring new tracts of thought, and tempting to new courses of action. This elevation above the ordinary temper of life, exposes the enthusiast to be misunderstood by calm and sedate understandings; it subjects him to the contempt of the witling, and the severer sentence of the more solemn dunce, while it renders him an object of wonder to the ignorant and vulgar; who either bow to him as an extraordinary genius, or scoff at him as an unhappy lunatic. This exaltation of mind, when strong and well founded, courageously makes way through all difficulties and perils, with an address by which it is enabled to accomplish actions apparently impracticable; those, therefore, on whom its influence has been most powerful and manifest, have ever been regarded as inspired; that is, directed by the counsels and sustained by the energies of a superior nature. To this quality it is that we owe every thing in human character and human productions most elevated and transcendent; SHAFTESBURY himself while arraigning its vices, and ridiculing its extravagancies, acknowledges that a just and noble enthusiasm is the genius of the Hero, the Legislator, the Philosopher, and the Poet,

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ALL minds, that do not absolutely wallow in the mire of gross sensuality would be enamoured of Solitude; would delight to rove in quiet gardens; recline beside translucent fountains, and penetrate the pensive shade of the majestic forest; could they hope to acquire these ravishing sensations, and gain the vigour and puissance of spirit generated by this supernatural agitation and fervour of the faculties and passions,

THE fanatic and mystical Visionary, whose character is next to be considered, though the same fervour inflames and agitates his passions, yet, has his intellect clouded by the fumes of ignorance and error: or by the specious and glittering vapours of imposture and deception. He creates fantastic images, and prostrates his reason and affections before them, while his hopes and belief obsequiously wait on each gigantic and unnatural conception. His senses cannot withstand, or they take part with, the betrayers of his reason; he beholds things invisible to the perception of others; he hears voices to which they listen in vain; he receives divine revelations; heavenly power informs his frame; he sees miracles, and he performs them. In the ecstasy of his delusion his fears of all obstacles and dangers, real or imaginary, are suspended. All opposition is ineffectual; the headstrong zeal of this passion renders it blind to all reasoning whatever; persuaded that impiety and malice alone can

can question the reality of its visions, remonstrance however gentle, serves only to exasperate its fury, and more fondly to attach it to its follies; which, at length it propagates with insolent intolerance, and enforces with pitiless rage and ferocity.

FANATICISM, though it derives peculiar virulence and strength from a religious origin, is not, however, confined to feelings of that character, nor excited solely by subjects of that nature. Not only the follies of *Faquirs*, the extravagances of *Orgiasts*, the fantastic excesses of Hermits and Monks, but the unreasonable surrender of all the senses and faculties to visionary systems, in Morals, Politics, or Science, is marked with all the features of fanaticism, and pregnant with all its calamitous effects.

THE seeds of Fanaticism have been sown in every age; and in all ages and places their growth is dangerous. Every bold and powerful character, who knows how to act on the passions of the multitude, becomes formidable to the government under which he lives, as soon as he is possessed by the demon of Fanaticism; or when to promote sinister designs he affects the appearance of it. LORD GEORGE GORDON, in the present age and among the enlightened English, was enabled by a face of pious zeal, probably only assumed, to convulse the mind of half the kingdom, and endanger

danger the interior peace of all its inhabitants. The presbyterians in Scotland regarded as a saint the young nobleman, who shook from his head the abomination of powder. Affecting in all things a godly simplicity of exterior and primitive austerity of manners, he succeeded in rendering himself the leader and chief of the national fanaticism. He was chosen president of all the Protestant Associations, and having a seat in the Parliament, stood forth as the pretended champion of religion; opposing alike the Ministry, and the Opposition; against whom he declaimed with much wit, with some appearance of justice, and with vast assumption of piety. The close of his career in 1780, is sufficiently known to preclude the necessity of enlarging on the important and formidable influence which a real or pretended fanaticism can obtain over the mind of the multitude; but it is worthy of observation, that while this incendiary sustained among his deluded followers the character of a man without sin or frailty, and while his measures rendered the English metropolis a scene of alarm, distress, conflagration, and slaughter, he regularly indulged his celestial inclinations in nocturnal visits to a professed wanton.\*

\* Every action and movement of Lord George Gordon, as might be expected at such a period, was vigilantly observed; and it was found, that he past some hours of every night in a *côte-à-côte* with Lady Grosvenor.

THE minutest spark of fanaticism is dangerous to the mind, into which it may fall, however in its general character calm, rational and luminous ; it should therefore be extinguished without a moment's delay by the occupations and duties of an active life. Of the advantage of this resource the history of the late DR. FOTHERGILL, affords a remarkable instance. This celebrated physician was, perhaps, indebted for the preservation of his reason to the necessity, imposed on him by his profession, of engaging in a variety of studies, and maintaining frequent intercourse with rational, well-informed, and thinking men. FOTHERGILL could by no means be deemed a man of violent passions, since he declared to one of his most intimate friends, but a short time before his death, that he had through his whole life been a stranger to the commerce of women ; and, though a strict Quaker, nothing in his general conduct or manners betrayed to his most familiar friends any propensity toward enthusiasm. When a student at Edinburgh he had been distinguished by the regularity, moderation and sedateness of his character ; yet, distant as the suspicion must be under all these circumstances that he should make himself the dupe of superstitious extravagance, it is well known that one day in an eccentric fally of fanaticism he ran, wholly naked, through the streets of that city, warning all its inhabitants

inhabitants of the impending wrath of heaven, and solemnly exhorting them to implore its mercy.

SIMILAR to this was the conduct of the holy FRANCIS of *Assisi*; but the madness of Francis continued throughout his life, while that of Fothergill commenced and terminated in a day. This sainted maniac, who had been an excessive libertine and debauchee, was, during the inactivity, confinement and uneasiness of a fit of sickness, visited by some reasonable doubts of his preparation for futurity. The result of his reflections was, that on his recovery, avoiding the society of his former profligate companions, he wandered about the streets of *Assisi* in garments that but half concealed his nakedness; in order to inure himself, as he said, to the taunts and ridicule of the children of sin and Satan. His father, who attributed these new extravagances to the ravage of disease in his intellect, would have confined his frantic son, till proper treatment might re-establish him in his senses. Francis declined his parental cares, and took sanctuary with the Bishop of *Assisi*, who sent for the father, and having calmly listened to his representations, turned to the young Saint in expectation of his reply. This last stripped himself of his rags, and casting them disdainfully at the feet of his father, said, "Take back what was  
 " your own: you were my father upon earth.

“henceforth I own no father but him who is in heaven.” Enchanted by this rant of the naked enthusiast, the bishop threw over him his own mantle, and exhorted him, stedfastly to adhere to his holy resolutions, and cherish his divine suggestions, for such he boldly pronounced them. Encouraged by this sanction Francis proceeded in the religious course he had entered, abandoned the city, and retired into an adjacent forest, to indulge his false enthusiasm. Had this ridiculous fanatic, like FOTHERGILL, sought shelter in the study of a liberal profession from the instigations of folly, with less fame he might have become a more respectable and useful character; or had FOTHERGILL, like FRANCIS, lived among a superstitious people, and been encouraged in his fanaticism by a credulous prelate, he might have persevered even to death in the pious frenzy, and been canonised by the ignorant multitude for a life of useless and pernicious extravagance.

THESE sallies of imagination burst into still wilder excesses and enormities, when the mind in the vacancy of solitude is left uninterruptedly to pursue their guidance. He who can indulge without impediment or distraction, the views of fancy, will soon lose the desire and power of every occupation, and pleasure but what is found in the gratification of this dangerous propensity. In the uniformity

uniformity and quiet of seclusion a susceptible and active imagination will always usurp a despotic dominion over the other faculties: The Monastic undoubtedly will often sink into thoughtless torpor and melancholy apathy; the continual perusal of ascetic writers, and meditation on childish and absurd legends, may extinguish in him all capacity of reflection. The continued interruption of his night's repose, will sometimes cover the day with the clouds of drowsiness, and quench his soul in sluggish lassitude; or abandoned to the proneness of appetite, he may voluntarily abdicate and shun the exercise of his reason; but if one or other of these events does not preserve him from the seductions that hover about the imagination, it is almost impossible for him to guard against the inroads of fantastic folly or savage fanaticism.

THESE evils affect the wise and informed no less than the ignorant and feeble mind; if, soliciting solitary meditation, and anxiously turning from all seasonable and salutary diversion, it surrenders itself to the conduct of an uncontrolled imagination. The learned MOLANUS having long habituated himself to detach his mind from objects of sense, and converse with the creatures of fancy, was in the latter part of his life unalterably persuaded that he was a barley corn. He received



his friends with the utmost courteousness, and conversed on subjects of science and devotion with great facility and ingenuity ; but, for several years previous to his death, he would never consent to quit his habitation, lest he should be picked up in the streets and swallowed by the fowls.

THE imaginations of women, as their feelings are more keen and exquisite, are more susceptible and ungovernable than those of men ; more obnoxious to the injurious influence of Solitude, more easily won upon by the arts of delusion, and inflamed by the contagion of the passions. Hence we may account for the rapidity with which, in orphan-houses, cloisters, and other institutions, where numbers of the Sex are intimately connected with each other, the sickness, humour, habits of one, if conspicuous and distinguished, become those of all. I remember to have read, in a medical writer of considerable merit, that in a French convent of Nuns, of more than common magnitude, one of the sisters was seized with a strange impulse to mew like a cat ; in which singular propensity she was shortly imitated by several other sisters, and finally, without a solitary exception, by the whole convent ; who all joined, at regular periods, in a general mew that lasted several hours. The neighbourhood heard, with more astonishment than edification,

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édification, the daily return of this celestial symphony ; which was silenced, after many ineffectual measures, by terrifying the modesty of the sex with the menace, that on any future repetition of their concert, a body of soldiers, pretended to be stationed at the gates of the monastery, would be called in, to inflict on them a discipline at once shameful and severe.

Among all the epidemic fancies of the sex I have found upon record, none equals that related by CARDAN, to have displayed itself in the fifteenth century ; which forcibly illustrates what has been remarked of the intuitive contagion, by which fantastic affection is propagated among women. A nun, in a certain German convent, was urged, by an unaccountable impulse, to bite all her companions ; and her strange caprice gradually spread to others, till the whole body was infected by the same fury. Nor did the evil confine itself within these limits : the report of this strange mania travelled from one province to another, and every where conveyed with it the infectious folly, from cloister to cloister, through the German empire : from thence extending itself, on each side, to Holland and Italy, the Nuns, at length, worried one another from Rome to Amsterdam.

NUMBERLESS instances might be quoted to de-

monstrate the force with which the strangest and most wild propensities fasten themselves on the imagination, and conquer and tyrannise over the will, when the soul is debarred from a free intercourse with its species, and left too uninterruptedly to its own unbridled musings. But those which we have related, may be sufficient to show the dangers into which he runs, who delivers himself unconditionally to the custody of Solitude, and does not arm himself against its faithless hospitality. Shut up in a barren and monotonous leisure, without studies to occupy curiosity, without objects to amuse the senses, or to interest and attach the affections to any thing human, fancy will escape into the worlds of chimerical existence, there to seek amusement and exercise. How fondly does it then embrace and cherish angelic visions, or infernal phantoms, prodigies, or miracles? or, should its reveries take another direction, with what increasing eagerness and confidence do its hopes hunt after the delusions of alchemy, the fictions of philosophy, and the deliriums of metaphysics? In cases where the mind is less capacious, and its stores less copious, it will attach itself to some absurd notion, the child of its languid and exhausted powers; and bestowing its fondest confidence on this darling of its dotage, will abandon reason, and outrage common sense.

A SINGLE glance on the history of the practices by which the solitary professors of almost all religions have been distinguished, will prove the bias of the human imagination to deviate into absurdity and madness, in the silence and leisure of retirement. To the fruitful womb of Solitude, all the mystic caprices and senseless extravagancies of the *New Platonists* owed their birth: while their brethren, the Christian monastics and anchorites, in their desolate retreats, fell no less a prey to folly and fanaticism: renouncing human intercourse, they sacrificed also human reason. Solitude was the parent of the *Fakirs*, *Bramins*, and every other sect of extravagant mystics, who shut out the pleasures and lessons of nature to keep themselves at leisure for the undisputed enjoyment of delusion, and the propagation of frenzy.

THE great founder of Christianity gave one simple rule of life to all men; but the desire of his disciples to imitate the heathens, their contemporaries, joined to that rage of distinction which governs the human heart, as well in its expectations of the future world as of the present, soon produced the doctrine that not only there were different degrees of salvation, but that there was a variety of paths to it. In the same manner had the ambition of the later *Platonists* in *Alexandria* devised the notion of two philosophies; one for the vulgar,

vulgar, servile herd; another more exalted, more arduous, more impracticable, for the aspiring and enterprising few. The first were to live conformably to the injunctions and directions of nature; the latter to raise themselves above her laws, her necessities, and indulgencies. It was one article of their philosophy, that the calls of sense should be disregarded; that the assistance of humanity, the delights of friendship, and the endearments of love, should be relinquished, as obstacles to the re-union of man with the Deity, in eternal felicity and perfection. Of this sect of Pagan philosophers few deigned to bear the conjugal yoke; which the more rigid deemed even a contamination to the purity of the soul, and a degradation of its grandeur. In severe Solitude and profound silence, they sought to emancipate their minds from the slavery of the senses, and to disengage their spirits from the confinement of matter; in the hopes, that having attained this perfection, they might, immediately on their death, be translated to the seats of the blessed: without passing through the long and fierce purifications, which they held requisite to remove the rank sinfulness of more carnal and mundane characters.

From the conjunction of these Pagan extravagancies with Christian doctrines was formed, during the second century, a system of morals, boasted

boasted to be of a more superior and more perfect order. According to the tenets of its professors, they rose to a far more exalted degree of Christian virtue, by a life detached from the affairs, the pleasures, and duties of Society; and when they had, by self-denial, mortification, and discipline, suppressed and expelled all carnal appetites, and overthrown the empire of the body, they persuaded themselves that their disencumbered spirits would, without further delay, seek the glories and beatitude of heaven. These fanatics therefore abstained from every thing inviting and useful to their nature; they abjured the enjoyment of the delicacies of the table, the endearing joys of the connubial bed, and condemned themselves to long fasts, obstinate vigils, and austere penances; the sooner to enable the soul to re-ascend to the regions of purity and bliss. They acquired the name of *Ascetics*, and distinguished themselves from their Christian brethren by the singularity of their dress, as well as by that of their manners and exercises.

THE rank soil of Egypt was the nursery of all these monstrous productions of religious extravagance. The taste of this people, in all things, inclined toward whatever appeared erroneous and unnatural. Their artists, as well as their priests and their philosophers, studied not the beautiful, but the mystic, the extraordinary, the vast, and prodigious.

prodigious. Egypt was the ancient nest of melancholy fancy and superstitious madness : her priests first wore the veil of mystery, with which science was disguised ; and formed the fantastic vapours, by which the philosophy and religion of the ancients were obscured and deformed, rather than illuminated and embellished.

FROM the decayed and corrupted relics of Egyptian religion and philosophy, arose the absurd doctrines and insane practices of the Christian anchorets and monastics ; but there was this aggravation of whatever was erroneous and unnatural in the ancient systems ; that instead of using the discipline and control of the body and its appetites to strengthen and facilitate the action, and maintain the independence of the mind, the new devotees regarded the voluntary abasement and punishment of the body as meritorious and sublime in its own nature : and believed when once their senses were sufficiently mortified, their righteousness was altogether perfect. To render themselves acceptable in the sight of God and become partakers of his essence and condition, the disciples of ANTONY, the great patriarch of all the Egyptian fanatics, conceived that nothing more was necessary than to bury themselves in the privations and austerities of the desert.

So far were these madmen, who are deemed the stars of the infant Church, from understanding human nature, that they employed their knowledge to exact from themselves and their proselytes every thing unnatural and impracticable. A shameless monk, SERAPION, quitting the deserts of *Thebais*, and transporting himself to Rome, either to exhibit, or by further experiments to consummate and ascertain his sanctity, was address'd by a young maid, who profess'd an entire indifference to every terrestrial good and every human opinion. "Good!" said the discreet and venerable SERAPION: "appear to-morrow divested of all your garments in some public place of the city: I will be there in a similar state, and we will pass through the chief streets of the city, proving that our hearts knowing no sin, our looks can testify no shame." "Alas!" said the shrinking girl: "so far as this I have not brought my piety: I will go and pray for strength to complete my imperfect sacrifice." "Fie, sister!" rejoined the monk: "no longer fancy yourself a lover of CHRIST; you, who can not give up an impure and vain world for the sake of his approbation; it is clear from this slight proof, that you are either desirous of the affection of the other sex, or fearful of the censures of your own."

THESE maxims were circulated with vehement zeal,



zeal, and received with eager faith through the whole Eastern empire. All who pretended to experience the emotions of the spirit cast off the sinful pomp and vanity of dress; relinquished the dignities of station, and the cares and duties of office; dismissed their attendants and domestics, and plunged into indigence and misery; by way of ingratiating themselves with Heaven, and entitling themselves to a larger portion of its bliss, and a higher rank of its glories.

PRINCIPLES like these acted with a mighty force on the imagination in Solitude, and gave birth to ever-varying and encreasing extravagances; as they operated on minds eccentric by habit, misled by concurrent errors, and infligated by vehement passions. It was soon held, that a pale and haggard countenance was becoming a monk; that an emaciated and enfeebled form was a necessary badge of a pure and righteous christian; and mortifications of all sorts were invented, as the surest passport to Paradise. JEROME asserts, that the virtue of the holy PAULA exceeded all human conceptions. Paula, it seems, ate more ashes than bread; and except on festivals, never indulged herself in the use of oil: these, with other penances equally rigid, were resorted to as safeguards to her chastity.

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THIS meagre and unpalatable diet had its origin in the recorded regulations appointed by Moses to be observed by the Hebrews in the mistaken ordinances of the Christian doctrine, and the distorted precepts of temperance enjoined by Pythagoras to his disciples: all these the philosophical fanatics misunderstood, caricatured, and rendered ridiculous and pernicious, by the wild extent to which they carried them.

PYTHAGORAS recommended to his solitary pupils habits of abstemiousness, at once to preserve their health and improve their faculties. He wisely judged that a free unencumbered state of body, would dispose them to more active exertion of their contemplative powers: keeping this maxim in sight, he enjoined them not only to refrain from all excess of sensual indulgence, but to relieve the labours of the intellect by the moderate use of the race, wrestling, dancing, and other sports, that the mind might thus be recreated after more severe and painful exercises. During these intervals of relaxation and amusement, he allowed them an exemption from the rigour of their accustomed silence; permitting them to enjoy the conversation of strangers, as well as of their fellow-disciples.

THE BRACHMANS, the Indian successors of  
PYTHAGORAS,

**PYTHAGORAS**, confined themselves wholly to vegetable diet; and in their glowing climate, secured themselves from the seductions and corruption of sensual intemperance by the austerity of their regimen.

**THE Egyptian THERAPEUTE**, who, though their rules were, in many instances extravagant, and even pernicious, were not destitute of sagacity in their designs, nor void of virtue in their motives, used to defer their meals till after sun-set; in order, that during the day the body, free from the grossness of food, might not interrupt the soul in its disquisitions and meditations. **THE INDIAN** and **MOHAMMEDAN** legislators, with the same regard to the physical and moral influence of climate, have been equally attentive rigorously to inculcate, as a civil and religious duty the most extreme simplicity and sparseness of diet.

**THE** zealots of solitary superstition however, abandoned, unreproved, to the illusions of an intemperate and overheated imagination, soon lost sight of all useful and rational objects in these regulations. They converted what was intended only to facilitate the progress in moral and intellectual excellence into the substance and summit of wisdom and piety. By hunger, thirst, nakedness and pain they sought to please, to propitiate

and to resemble the Deity; their notion of whose goodness and mercy was that, he had built this goodly earth, and furnished it with such plenteousness and variety of joys, merely to tantalise the passions which they excited: and to embitter the existence of his creatures by the prospect of gratifications they were prohibited to taste. The Christian Ascetics, who most vehemently contended in principle and practice for the austerity of discipline as necessary to Christian purity, observed their long-protracted fasts in so rigorous a manner that multitudes lost their senses rather than appease their hunger. To suffer the anguish of thirst also ranked high among their virtues: This was deemed so indispensable to preparing the soul for supreme salvation, that one day, when a disciple of the great MACARIUS, who was practising this self-denial in the full fury of a meridian sun, fainting with agony implored the refreshment of a drop of water, the Saint would indulge him with no other mitigation of his torment but what a retreat into the shade might afford him; earnestly exhorting him, meanwhile, to restore his exhausted strength and constancy by imaging to himself the more intolerable heat of Hell, from which his present tortures exempted him; and the ravishing splendor of Paradise, to which by his exercise of patience and resignation he was then at once entitling and habituating himself.

SOLITUDE impregnated by these monkish maxims brought forth all that numerous and wayward tribe of mortifications and penances, which were recurred to in the eastern regions, and afterwards in others, to repress the turbulence of the passions, and preserve the purity of the soul. The affliction of the body had long been considered by the new race of Platonists and Pythagoreans as instrumental to raising the mind toward the Divine Nature, by releasing it from the dark and cumbrous folds of matter; and securing to the soul its ascendancy over the earthly and sordid appetites of the body; The Christian Ascetics, embracing this tenet, placed their highest delight in multiplying the sufferings of sense, by every artificial refinement upon bodily anguish. To them emasculation was so slight a sacrifice, that this bloody and dangerous operation, though frequently practised, obtained no high honours. JEROME exhorted all monks and hermits to deprive themselves of every member that offended them; and the Saint knew by bitter experience full well, in what member the fiercest and most obstinate offence was stationed. The pious inhabitants of the deserts of *Thebais* either condemned themselves to perpetual imprisonment in gloomy caverns, or tore off their garments and wandered, in nakedness, among the beasts of the wilderness. The very dwelling places of the *Egyptian* monastics were so contrived as to  
become

become engines of torture; and every frantic scheme of a deluded mind, to create for itself intolerable misery, was regarded as a meritorious and god-like effort of reason and religion.

MOSSES, an Egyptian abbot, to impress their duties upon the hearts of his pupils, threw his mantle upon the earth, and trampling upon it, bade every one that would not so stamp upon and crush his body abandon the vain belief that he was fit to be a monk. ARSENIUS maintained a constant stench of putrid palm-leaves in his cell; hoping by this composition with his eternal judge to escape the more intolerably foetid and offensive vapors of Hell. HILARION, the great HILARION as he is called, from his sixteenth to his twentieth year dwelt uninterruptedly in a little hut of reeds, penetrable on every side by the heat and cold and moisture of heaven. He then formed a cell so low as entirely to prevent him from ever assuming an erect posture in it; in short, in its figure as well as dimensions it was more like a grave than the abode of a living-being: and here he remained till death relieved him from a voluntary confinement, more horrible than any which irritated cruelty ever imposed. DOROTHEUS buried himself for sixty years in the cavity of a rock; and JOHN, the Seer, continued three successive years in a similar situation, incessantly engaged in offices of devotion,

devotion, and never sitting or lying till his legs of thighs ulcerated and finally mortified. MACARIUS of *Alexandria* during the whole season of Lent sat upon the summit of a hill within a narrow cell, that inclosed him in profound darkness; and in his usual habitation there was not sufficient room for him to extend his limbs. In this confined mansion he once in a sudden transport of anger killed a reptile, that fastened on his foot; tortured with remorse, on account of the ungodly action, he voluntarily withdrew into the recesses of a Scythian morass, where throwing himself among a swarm of venomous animals, whose size and virulence had increased beyond measure in the rankness of the uncultivated soil, he continued till the destructive vermin had devoured all that part of the body, on which Saints, like other persons, are accustomed to sit.\*

But to enumerate every instance of extravagant frenzy among this holy race were endless: In the estimation of all of them to dwell among the brute and savage creation, living after their manner,

\* The relater of all these tragical tales is HERACLIDES, bishop of *Bythynia*, in his *Paradisus, seu de sanctis, Egypti et variorum lacuum Ratribus*. This good priest had resided four years in *Antibina*, a central point among these martyrs; and afterward had visited with curious search all the cloisters of *Thebais*, and even the solitary cells of the numerous scattered anchorets.

and

wandering

wandering naked in waste and desolate tracts, and maintaining a feeble and wretched existence with-  
grafs and other the most insipid and unsavory  
productions of the earth; to shun the intercourse  
and even sight of men; to remain years on one  
spot, without motion, under all the inclemencies  
of weather and vicissitudes of the various seasons,  
or to entomb themselves in confined and gloomy  
cells and caverns, and endure till death a living  
interment; these were the most approved means  
of propitiating the goodness, and approaching the  
nature of their heavenly Father.

They were silly enough to hope that by thus  
transforming themselves into beasts, they not only  
secured their ultimate recompense in the joys and  
glories of heaven, but opened a correspondence  
with celestial Spirits here on earth. Sulpicius  
Severus gives an account of one of these candi-  
dates for the communion of angels, who had roved  
about the vicinity of *Sinai* near fifty years, with  
no other covering than what nature had bestowed  
on him, and without ever approaching the habi-  
tations of men; or entering into discourse with  
such as casually met or designedly sought him,  
in the hope of profiting by his precepts and in-  
structions. Once, however, he designed to answer  
the inquiries of a friend of Severus respecting the  
motives of his stubborn refusal, and informed him,



that he, who enjoyed the society of cherubim and seraphim felt only aversion for the intercourse of men. Many Saints of both sexes in later periods of the Christian church have aspired to the communion of celestial spirits with zeal and resolution equally remarkable. With this view *PASSIDEA* of *Siena* always slept on a hard board, or made her couch on the earth of cherry stones or briars. She generally walked barefoot, or if she indulged in the luxury of shoes, she qualified it by wearing in them hard peas or hot ashes. At her devotions she knelt on thorns and thistles, sometimes on iron plates full of sharp points; and on great occasions her knees were condemned to press on heated nails and pieces of metal still glowing from the furnace. As a peculiar and unprecedented mode of mortification she hung herself up in a chimney with her head reversed, and had a fire kindled beneath of wet straw and hay, that she might enjoy all the benefits of flame and smoke toward qualifying her for the society of angels.

THE solitary Devotees of *Malabar* at present conceive they render themselves acceptable to their Deity by remaining months together naked on the same spot, receiving the beams of a vertical sun on their bare heads; and keeping their legs and arms extended in one posture till they have lost all power of moving them; or by walking on  
their

their hands and carrying their feet raised into the air; but above all by having their bodies perforated, and then being suspended from a gibbet by a cord past through the wound. These, and similar heroic extravagances of false piety, are all undertaken upon the principle of seeking God in tranquillity and solitude; and struggling to elevate the soul to his presence and communion by emancipating it from the incumbrance and controul of its material covering. These are the follies which Solitude has generated in nations of characters the most opposite, and religions the most dissimilar and unallied.

THE earliest Christian Anchorets were not in general impostors; but seem to have been themselves deluded by the wanderings of reason and the deceits of imagination; though, if JEROME may be relied on, some insincerity and artifice were mingled in their pretended encounters with the demons.\* Yet as innumerable proofs recur to satisfy us, that the passions, of which these infernal spectres seem to have been the representatives, raged with a most violent and disturbing fury in the minds of these solitary fanatics; it seems pro-

\* Inepti homines demonum contra se pugnantium portenta confingunt, ut apud imperitos et vulgi homines miraculum sui faciunt et exinde lucra sectentur.

bable that their imaginations, heightened and overpowered by the ferment and tumult of desire, and disordered by the terrors of superstition, invested the forcible suggestions of appetite with the imaginary forms of those evil spirits, to whose imputation all the vices of humanity were attributed.

AN equal illusion, or in some cases a greater fraud, produced the claim, arrogated by the Egyptian and Oriental Monks, of a power, by prayer and faith, to perform miracles. Though every pious and consistent Christian will confide in the assurances of Peter to the Jews, that on their conversion the gifts of the Holy Spirit should enter into them and their children, and even descend upon the Gentiles; though the learned have not agreed as to the period in which the power was discontinued to the Church; while the Catholics deny that it has ever been suspended; \* though few sincere believers therefore will deny the possibility of the miraculous powers conferred on the first

\* Some members of the Protestant communion have lately subscribed to this tenet of their rival church. LAVATER, whose talents can never be too much admired, though he has sometimes given an illusory light to his contemporaries, some years since adopted it as an article of Christian faith. His friends reasoned, remonstrated, and implored in vain: Lavater considered his opinion as fully and irrefragably established, and persisted to esteem it the touchstone of orthodox Christianity,

ministers

ministers of the Gospel, having been extended through a long line of their successors ; yet should we be cautious of admitting in any single instance the fact of their exertion ; particularly when we recollect that the æra of the most numerous and extraordinary prodigies, is the period in which the most absurd and lamentable superstition had gained an empire almost universal ; and ruled with a more fantastic tyranny over the followers of Christianity, than even among the nations abandoned to all the wretched errors of a lawless idolatry.

It has been justly remarked by the learned and discerning MEINER, that the Christian Saints and Christian miracles of the earlier centuries, closely resemble the prodigies and magicians of antiquity ; and that they are, therefore, in all probability, nearly related to each other. The former employed their Angels as the latter their Dæmons : both of them in effect, however their forms might differ, professed to use amulets, charms, and spells, by which they moved all the powers of nature to execute their pleasure ; compelling them to renounce their own purposes, and inducing even the Supreme to submit his ordinances and resolves to their wishes.

FAITH, abstinence, and prayer, were the charms by which the Christians of the third, fourth, and fifth

fifth centuries, hoped to obtain this influence over Nature and Nature's God. This was their magic, evidently borrowed, with adaptations to their peculiar system of theology, from the Pagan rites of invocation. These means were employed by both, to summon and subject superior Beings; to recall from the grave the spirits of the departed; to restore animation to the dead; to assume, at liberty, various appearances; to inflict and relieve from diseases; to preface events treasured up in distant futurity; to inflame their enemies and persecutors with the most violent and frantic passions; or to torment them, by delivering them to the active malice of envious and exasperated Fiends.

THE most enlightened ecclesiastical historians have, therefore, on due consideration, confined the miraculous powers of the Church to a very short period, and to a small number of instances; while some have absolutely denied their existence. But admitting the fact, that on certain occasions, and in certain particulars, this supernatural faculty may have been exerted, no human being in his sound mind, can ever credit the fantastic and marvellous legends which compose the annals of the Saints, and which are manifestly the dreams of doting Superstition, or the fabrications of fraudulent Hypocrisy. An emulous desire of equalling the Apostles, and an arrogant ambition of supposing themselves  
inferior,

inferior, neither in piety nor power, to the first professors and teachers of their religion, encouraged by the imposing influence of a mournful solitude on distempered imaginations, might persuade the monastics and hermits of the early ages, to think themselves endowed with supernatural ability: while the less deluded members of the Church, eager to advance and sustain its authority, and encouraged by the maxim of Christian policy, universally received in the fourth century, that imposture and falsehood become laudable, when employed in the establishment of truth and religion, sanctioned these pious illusions and deceptions; by their talents and authority, enforcing an easy belief to every lying legend, from a credulous and bigotted people.

To the reveries of Solitude, and the force of imagination, must be ascribed the numerous miracles which the Monastics pretend to have performed by their credit with the Holy Spirit; but it is infinitely more probable that retirement and mortification should deprive their victims of the faculties they possessed, in common with all men, than impart to them those of a superior nature. The human mind, when the senses were confined to savage and desolate wilds, and punished by frequent and long fasts, and tedious vigils, by castigations and penances, would recoil with ungovernable

vernable vehemence, from the contemplation of barren wastes, and unfriendly deserts, to walk with the enchantress, Fancy, through her gay and delightful regions. Not recalled by the warning voice of sober reflection, nor restrained by the opposition of occurrences, natural and moral, in the path of nature and reason, the harassed Soul would seek to escape its present sufferings, by anticipating future worlds of imaginary glory and happiness; and thus plunge itself into all the extravagancies of fanatical delirium. Some indeed, whose conduct or temper placed them under the domination of fear, would, instead of these visions of delight and hope, be haunted by melancholy and frightful spectres, and writhe in the despair and agonies of a self-created hell.

THE great visionary, the brain-sick ANTONY, mistook conceit for reality, when he believed himself, by force of faith and supplication, to have opened fountains in the parching desert; to have expelled devils; endowed asses with reason and discourse; and instilled humanity and kindness into savage animals; to have beheld the souls of the just ascending to heaven; and to have, himself, in his trances, moved along the air, far above the surface and even sight of the earth.

THE great JEROME surely confounded fiction  
with

with truth, when he persuaded himself that he had been summoned and transported to the presence of the Almighty, where, on answering to the inquiry of "Who he was?" that he was a Christian, he was told "there was no truth in him, for that he was a disciple not of Christ, but of Cicero:" and was therefore scourged by angels as a Ciceronian and a Heathen, till the firmament of Heaven rang with his outcries. In vain does the Saint forbid us to think this one of those visions which so frequently impose on the too fervid imagination: the reasoning mind cannot but be conscious he was their dupe.

A SIMILAR illusion prevailed over the reason of HILARION, when he conceived himself visited in his cell by naked beauties; and his purity assailed by their wanton blandishments. Nor was he less deceived in thinking that the hunger of his devout abstinences was tempted by the presence of the most delicious viands; the abstraction of his prayers interrupted or prevented by the constant howls of wolves, or barking of foxes; and his attention to all his pious exercises, disturbed by the sollicitations of sense, the instigations of fear, or the appeals of compassion.

To this deceitfulness of imagination, must we impute the asseverations of MACARIUS; that he



had raised persons from the grave, and impowered them to hold long discourse with him ; that only touching with his staff a number of skulls, they had related to him the events in which the bodies they belonged to had borne a part while living ; that he had fought hand to hand with the Devil ; that he had beheld fiends, who, settled, like flies, about the eyes and mouth of a young anchoret, during his devotions, driven away with a flaming sword by an attendant angel ; that he saw a train of fire reach from Heaven to the lips of another pious recluse, whenever engaged in his adorations either of prayer or song. These, and various other relations of the miracles of which this celebrated Saint had been agent, or witness, must be regarded neither as actual facts, nor wilful forgeries, but as the visions of an inebriated and disordered imagination.

To what, but an illusion of the fancy, can we impute the assertions of the pious abbot, SERANUS ; who by abstinence and vigils, by prayer and faith, had extinguished within himself all carnal cupidity, “ even as it were a taper.” The Saint, however, was by no means satisfied with this mental purity ; in his ambition for the palm of chastity, he desired that the extirpation of the interior sentiment should be followed by equal reform in the exterior organs ; and that he might be no longer subject to the movements natural to that part which Plato assigns

as

as the peculiar province and fastness of concupiscence. SERANUS thought, that what others had effected by material means and instruments might be accomplished more efficaciously and honourably by celestial interference, if the favour were duly merited by a purgation of the heart from every unclean affection. The miracle, he tells us, was granted to his faith and his purity ; an angel descended, and with a pair of tongs gently, but completely, removed the cause of his uneasiness.

ALL these prodigies were supposed to be fruits of the efficacy of faith and prayer ; but, who can entertain any doubt, that they were rather the forgeries of ambitious hypocrisy, or the chimerical illusions of a disordered brain ?

THE restless and irksome lassitude generated by that impatience of the tedious and lingering hours, under which every Hermit and Monk must have constantly smarted, is among the most dreadful evils of a solitude inordinately austere. How slowly must the hours drag on with those prevented from bodily labour by the violent and fierce oppression of a burning heaven ; whose maxims forbade them every ordinary amusement and pastime ; and constrained them to exercises of mind, impossible to be persisted in without exhausting the  
spirits,

spirits, overpowering their activity, and impairing all soundness and vigour of intellect! A severe and accurate observer of the Egyptian monastics, CASSIANUS, has described the joyless and melancholy temper of their souls with a strength of language and a fidelity of pencil truly dreadful: he at once suggests the means which may best serve them as safeguards against the peculiar horrors and crimes of their condition, and displays all the shame and misery inevitably resulting from it.

HE represents the harassed and uneasy state of their mind as proceeding from “an universal  
 “chagrin and impatient loathing of existence;  
 “which betrayed itself in an eager passion for  
 “continual change of place, in a hatred of the  
 “cloister, a horror of the cell, and aversion from  
 “the fraternity; by a reluctance to labour, yet  
 “dissatisfaction with, and inability of rest; by an  
 “anxious but inattentive and distracted wander-  
 “ing about the place of their continued tho’ un-  
 “endeared abode; by involuntary and continual  
 “sighs; by vehement longings for distant scenes;  
 “by a keener sense of hunger, and more vexatious  
 “importunity of all the appetites; in short, by a  
 “listless, joyless, unendearing temper, and a  
 “languid, turbid, unquiet deportment.” Such is  
 a brief and faint transcript of the picture Cassianus  
 has traced at large of this monstrous state of  
 mind,

mind, the offspring and enemy of religious solitude.

THIS Limner of the soul had from his earliest youth been resident in a cloister in Bethlehem; where by his own experience, he had learnt the emotions and sufferings which infest the bosom, and feed upon the peace and happiness of monastics. From thence, about the end of the fourth century, he removed to Egypt, and employed seven years in visiting the various cells and convents in the mountains of *Nitria*, and the deserts of *Thebais*. The disgust of existence must have prevailed very generally among the Egyptian monks, since CASSIANUS reckons it among the vices, which naturally grow out of their condition, and admonishes and warns them against its invasion, no less than against gluttony, incontinence, pride, ambition, envy and malice; the sins which, notoriously, most easily and constantly beset them.

MELANCHOLY and madness were, in the Oriental countries, not unfrequently sources of the inclination to Solitude; which, in its turn, produced those very distempers. Numbers of monastics and anchorets had their imaginations so kindled and inflamed, that it was necessary to restore them to the commerce of mankind: and by employing them in business, or even pleasure, to cool the

fervour of their feverish brains, and repress their exalted fancies to the level of rational humanity. HERACLIDES confesses, that the holy VALENS was during a whole year, confined in chains by his brethren in faith and piety, who continually prostrated themselves before God to obtain his restoration to his senses. JEROME, whose evidence on such facts it is impossible to suspect, declares, that multitudes of the servants of Christ, by immoderate fasting, obstinate confinement to their cells, long struggling with their natural dislike of solitude, and continued study and meditation of gloomy doctrines and frightful images, were reduced to a disorder of soul, which required the consultation of the maxims of Hippocrates, rather than the precepts of the Gospel. It appears in the writings of GREGORY NAZIANZEN, that many monks within his own diocese, released themselves from the insupportable weight of a solitary life by the sword, the rope, and even by voluntary famine. We read in the pious TILLEMONT, of the frequent suicides which occurred during the early periods of monachism among its professors, who deprived themselves of life in order to escape temptations which they feared to obey, yet felt too feeble and irresolute to resist; the same author also abounds with similar instances of nuns, who, in every cloister, hung or drowned themselves, overcome by the melancholy of dejection and the horror of despair.

despair. So frequently indeed, did the extravagant illusions of the hermit, and the stubborn infatuation of the monk, conduct to sad insanity, or furious phrensy, that, at the close of the fifth century, an hospital was erected in Jerusalem, solely for the reception of those unhappy victims of superstition, whose senses had deserted them in the cave or the convent.

THE various chimerical delusions, that Solitude has engendered, or nurtured and matured in deceased imaginations, defy conception or enumeration. Many solitary bigots have believed themselves endowed with the Spirit of the Deity, and translated into the Divine Essence, when they had by their absurd and unnatural practices extinguished their reason; or as they termed it, "had perished, by the force of philosophy and the aid of Grace, to the abjectness and darkness of sense."

THESE subtle Saints confined their sight and attention to some single spot, on which they fixed them so immoveably as to be undisturbed by the distracting fluctuation of the passions: by these means collecting and fixing the central energy of the soul. To throw off the empire of the senses, they renounced their advice and assistance; they ate and drank indifferently every kind of viand, however nauseous or hurtful; and practised them-

selves to endure without emotion the fiercest inclemency of the seasons. PYTHAGORAS had directed his disciples to fit the soul for elevated contemplations by detaching it from all impediments of weakness or grossness, and habituating it to abstract relations and intellectual objects. He recommended the purer parts of mathematics as the ladder, by which the mind was to exalt itself to the consideration of the principle of all truth: to that single and perfect point every investigation was finally to conduct the intelligent faculty. To second these noble efforts of the purer and more active elements of humanity, the soul was to divest itself of the cumbrous body, to harden itself against the appeal of all appetites and desires; and to die to every thing but philosophy. This separation effected, the soul was gradually to re-ascend to the Divinity, its origin and fountain; and by the joint virtues of Solitude, silence and mental adoration become re-united to the Divine Nature in eternal beatitude and illumination.

RIGID abstinence; steady and profound speculation; the abstraction of the soul from every sensual pleasure and material object; the entire devotion of the mind to its duty by the subjection, and as it were extinction, of the body, were accounted by the Platonists of the second century, the end of philosophy, and the consummation of all wisdom.

dom. The Christian anchorets, their successors and imitators in mysticism, rivalled and surpassed them in this divine knowledge. MACARIUS of Alexandria, filled with heavenly aspirations, resolved, during five entire days, to keep his contemplations immoveably fixed upon the perfections of the Godhead: securing himself, therefore, from the intrusion of external objects, he thus encouraged himself to the completion of this pious purpose. "Take care, O, my Soul! that thou dost not descend from the loftiness of the celestial world; there thou art in the presence of angels and archangels, of cherubim and seraphim, of all heavenly dignities and powers, and even of thy Creator and God: Disdain then to precipitate thyself from these glorious and divine objects to the sordid and abject cares or desires of earth!" For two days and nights MACARIUS persisted in this elevation of soul; much, says the legend, to the exasperation of the devil; who racking his malicious invention to divert, or tear the holy man violently from his sublime speculations, at last accomplished his infernal purpose; by persuading the Saint, that he was converted into a flame of fire, and was kindling and consuming every thing around him. This insidious suggestion discomposed his reason and disturbed his temper, and thus dissipated his divine contemplations.



THE solitary devotees, both of the Christian and Pagan system, were perfectly agreed in the necessity of fixing the mortal sight, tenaciously on one immoveable point, as a means of disengaging the soul from all earthly hindrance. They asserted that, thus secured from the intrusion and incumbrance of the body, they beheld wondrous forms of supreme perfection and beauty; were assimilated to the Divinity, and participated the bliss of incorporeal Spirits.

THE mystics of INDOSTAN denominate the Deity himself, ACHAR, or the Immoveable; and recommend the constant and profound contemplation of Space, the ancient forerunner and parent of all things. Their brethren, the *Faquirs*, entertain the highest veneration for an order, called the Illuminated, or Incorporated with God; the history of whose celestial visions exhibits in full force the operation of an overheated imagination or disordered reason. These pretenders to Illumination are monks, who, having accomplished the conquest of all carnal and worldly desires, retire to places remote from the habitations of men, where they live in the exercise of the severest austerities; eating when any food is brought to them, at other times feeding on grace only; plunging themselves into profound abstraction, gazing for hours upon a single point, and finally,

suspending all recollection and sensation. In this divine enfranchisement of soul, we are told, they behold the Universal Power under the symbol of a most white, pure, and inexpressibly glorious flame. Previous to this triumph over mortality, they are accustomed to take no sustenance but of the simplest kind, and in the smallest possible quantity; after which, persisting in a stubborn silence, and gazing upwards with strained eyeballs, till the crisis of ecstasy appears to approach, they then, gradually declining their sight, direct it to the tip of the nose; when the celestial light, the reward of all their efforts, rises to their ravished sight, and overwhelms them with ecstasy.

THE Saints of *India* elevate themselves above the wants, infirmities and incumbrance of matter, by drugs of intoxicating quality; and the *Egyptian Mystics* prepare an infusion of plants, found in their country, of which a small portion disorders their senses and enables them to see whatever they will. An electuary brought from *India* is held in great veneration among the Egyptian fanatics; its operation, except in the suddenness and brevity of its effects, closely corresponds to that of religious solitude. It first renders the patient cheerful, then extravagantly gay: afterwards furiously frantic, or gloomily despondent; weariness and drowsiness succeed; and its influence, concluding with sleep,

restores to him the use of his mental and bodily faculties.

THESE inebriating aids have not always been necessary to urge the mind into the absurdity and rage of mysticism. About the year of Christ, 304, appeared a religious sect in *China*, denominating themselves teachers of vacuity and non-entity, who professed to reveal the art of obstructing the action of sense and reason, and suspending all the functions of the soul in a state of perfect stagnation ; which they represented as the highest good and most excellent condition of existence. The fanatics of *Japan* aspire to an abstraction of thought on the mysteries of the Godhead, wherein the organs acknowledge no impressions, nor the corporeal powers indicate any movements of animation. This profoundness of cogitation is equally revered and cultivated by the priests of *Xaca*, one of whom, DAZMA, cut away his eye-lids, believing them obstacles to his ecstatic visions ; by this act of enthusiasm acquiring the fame of transcendent sanctity. The chief temple of the *Siamese* capital, contains a colossal statue of *Xaca*, in a posture of entranced meditation and detachment from sense, that serves as a model to his numerous votaries ; who daily exercise themselves in assuming and maintaining the holy elopement from the vain and sordid objects and concerns of humanity : by this means, as they assert, they  
escape

escape from the dark confinement of mortal grossness and imperfection, and rejoin the Divine Nature, their original source, in purity, elevation, and felicity.

THE source of Christian mysticism, and origin of every extravagance of their solitary superstition, will be found solely, (some misapprehended passages of the Gospel excepted,) in the Alexandrine Platonism ; a system of philosophical frenzy, by which its founder, AMMONIUS, gathered Christians and Pagans into one fraternity of folly. The grand principle of these doctrines was, that every human soul was of divine origin ; that its reason emanated from the Divinity ; and therefore, by natural reflux, must tend to return to the illimitable ocean of intelligence, whence it was derived. The first adopters of this sublime notion denied that the reason of man could be indebted for improvement to worldly experience, inquiries, or exercises ; and accordingly neglected every opportunity of enlarging their knowledge, and disdained any attention to science or observation. They sought, on the contrary, to cultivate, fertilise, and embellish the mind, by inactivity, silence, solitude, mortification of the senses, and renunciation of reason : these were the means which they adopted to purge the inward light from the flames of error and clouds of ignorance, which rising from the soul  
and

and noxious commerce with a depraved and brutalized world, obscured its purity, and impaired its lustre. Their favourite tenet was, that the Soul re-ascends to communion and participation with God, as soon as the mind has withdrawn itself from all earthly concerns, and completely repelled the intrusions of sensible objects; it then exists in unutterable joy, and is enabled to contemplate truth unveiled, and in the fulness of her charms and glory; while those, who continue to wear the chains of sense, are cheated with a vain form of pleasure, and behold all the objects of human sense or reason, disguised, illusive, and deformed.

DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA, a crazy Greek, built upon this wild theology absurdities still more ludicrous. He preached the excellence and perfection of utter darkness of soul, and led a multitude of persons into the deserts, where by his example and instructions they taught themselves to live in holy abstinence, inaction and insensibility; believing that when they had ceased to be distinguishable from inanimate existence, they were assimilated to the nature of the Divinity.

THIS race of over-righteous Christians was succeeded in the fifth century by another class of eccentric bigots, who soon engrossed the popular admiration by elevating themselves upon columns and

and assuming the character of living statues; SIMEON STYLITES, the inventor of this whimsical extravagance, rose on his lofty station to pre-eminent glory, and his imitators in *Syria* and *Palestine* were exceedingly numerous. This folly survived in the East several ages, and did not entirely perish till the middle of the twelfth century. In the West its practice was more limited in extent, and was speedily suppressed; probably as much from the colder temperature of the clime as from the efforts of the bishops to discountenance it. They demolished a column near *Triers*, on which a monk of Lombardy, named VULFILAIC had about the year 591 planted himself; his pious exaltation, repressed by this discouragement, was neither repeated by himself nor imitated by others.

THE more sober inhabitants of the Western Empire, after this single folly of borrowed extravagance had been checked, continued free from the invasion of fanaticism, till the Emperor MICHAEL, in the ninth century, conceived and executed the unfortunate resolution of sending to LEWIS *the Good* the pretended works of DIONYSIUS ARBOGITA. These, translated by JOHN SCOTUS, the famous court philosopher of CHARLES *the Bald*, spread with a pernicious success over the whole empire: they were eagerly received by clergy and laity, and produced various sects of recluses, who, during

during a succession of centuries, boasted of their complete decease to this world and perfect resurrection to God.

BUT no sect of Enthusiasts in our quarter of the globe has exceeded the extravagant absurdity of the *Omphalopsychists*. It appears from the history of the church during the fourteenth century, that the monks of mount *Athos* maintained that the light, which appeared at the birth of their Saviour, was uncreated, and indeed God himself; and they pretended to have advanced so far in pious refinement and exaltation as to have this miraculous and divine light disclosed to them. GREGORY OF *Palamas*, their founder and chief, having abandoned for the monastic life the court of *Constantinople*, in which he had been educated, was finally advanced to the archbishoprick of *Thessalonica*. His followers were denominated *Omphalopsychists*, or persons that have their soul in the navel; because in their devotions it was their practice to decline their chins on their breasts, and direct the whole energy of mental attention to the middle point of the belly.

MYSTICISM became a refreshment and medicine to many active and ardent minds, in periods when religion was usurped by the darkness of superstition or the perplexity of scholastic theology; when the heart

heart of sensibility found nothing to qualify its affections in the principles and rites of the church. In the fifteenth century, accordingly, many characters of superior merit attached themselves to habits of abstract reflection; the most remarkable of whom were JEROME SAVONAROLA and THOMAS-A-KEMPIS. Of all the books that have fascinated the European world, none, perhaps, has ever been so universally read as the treatise of the latter "On the Imitation of the Redeemer." In this famous work the world and God are always placed in opposition to each other, and the life of the Christian is represented meritorious only as the commerce of his fellow-creatures is neglected and despised; their interests disregarded; all consolations, succour and aid to them avoided or repelled. Enlightened and liberal ministers of the gospel in succeeding periods have shewn that the practice of the founder of Christianity was by no means such as KEMPIS has described and recommended to the imitation of his believers. In the work of this fanatic they have been unable to discover any traces of that humane activity, that diffusive compassion, that rational and moderate limitation of his systems to the powers of nature, which every where mark the life and doctrines of the mild and indulgent JESUS. They found, in short, this admirable piece to be the master-piece of mysticism, so remote from all rational piety, that, instead of  
feeling



feeling their knowledge of Christianity and veneration of its great author improved and enlightened by an attentive study of it, they quitted the perusal, perplexed with uncertainty and blinded with doubts, respecting that Christianity which in itself is so truly admirable for its plainness and simplicity.

WITH so little true illumination, with such miserable misconceptions of religion and philosophy, it was natural that the zealots, separated from the restraints and corrections imposed by a rational commerce with Society, should rush into the wildest errors and most frantic delusions. From their beloved Solitude, that fertile source of human extravagance, flowed, perhaps, all that is most grotesque or frightful in mysticism; whatever sinks the soul in the deepest abyss of absurdity, or mounts it to the most giddy and perilous elevation. They pretended to attain a supernatural degree of internal light, harmony, and enjoyment; to feel extraordinary emotions; to acquire new senses; to undergo transformations of being; to rise to endowments that transcend human imagination. Such is the boast of JACOB BÖHMEN, the poet, philosopher and shoemaker of *Gorlitz*, and his crazy disciples, who, destitute of all manly sense, arrogate the glory of divine wisdom; and triumph over the foolishness of the informed part of mankind; by whom the rhapsodies of their master, less  
visionary

visionary than nonsensical, are justly despised and derided.

It has, indeed, been recently asserted in the *German Museum* "that DR. BYROM of Manchester  
 " had in the last years of his life acquired the  
 " German language solely to acquaint himself  
 " with Jacob Bœhmen in the original, and had  
 " exclaimed after the perusal of his admired sage,  
 " Now, divine Jacob, I comprehend thy vast sagacity,  
 " and see all the philosophy of the world  
 " vanish before a page of thy works!"—NEWTON,  
 " we are told by this critic, was a diligent reader  
 " of Jacob Bœhmen, and had learnt from him the  
 " laws of attraction and the principles of planetary  
 " motion. He informs us also that in the year  
 " 1781, the fourth volume of an English translation  
 " of Bœhmen had appeared under the title of 'the  
 " works of Jacob Bœhmen, the German philosopher."

THE writer of this Museum, however, has not informed us what reception the works of the German Sage found among the English. It was said by that informed and reflecting people, that,  
 " none but the brain-sick should read JACOB  
 " BŒHMEN, as such only would discover every  
 " species of truth in works, which, in fact, contained none." Men of superior ability, and the highest cultivation declared, that having  
 studied

studied Jacob's chymico-metaphysico-mystical problems, with all the attention due to Euclid himself, they had gained only the mortification of finding that they had been consuming their time and efforts in rending their brains with some crude and vulgar prejudices; which, if simply exprest, would have as little perplexed, as enriched, the apprehension of a child. BØHMEN, makes an unnatural application of chymical terms and phrases to subjects of metaphysics and theology; and thickens the obscurity this produces by mingling with them the language of alchymy and the cabala. He collects the follies of false erudition, the visions of astrology, and the fables of Rosy-crucianism, into a focus of mystical nonsense: thus composing a ludicrous jumble of absurdity from the conjunction of all these incongruous forms of insanity.

SUCH instances cannot fail to establish a conviction that what are termed the exalted tranquillity of silence and inactivity; the divine union with the Deity; and the mysterious imitation of the Saviour; are only illusions of imagination, led astray by the seductions of Solitude, and obscured as well as heated by the fumes of Enthusiasm.

SOLITUDE is still more prolific of visionary insanity in the minds of women than in those of men;

men; since the imaginations of the latter are in general less governed by an irritable sensibility, and more restrained by stability of judgment. What is phantasy in man mounts in the other sex into phrensy; what is zeal in the one, flies in the other into passion and madness. PLATO, indeed, accounts women the nurses of all fanatical mysteries; the symptoms of which must be studied among its female vdtaries, by all who would learn to what excesses it may be impelled, in the stillness and abstraction of Solitude; and the additional violence it derives from the open and secret movements of sensuality; as the natural antidote to which it has been so vehemently recommended by its advocates.

THE favourite fanaticism of women, that which has been dignified with the terms of a sublime passion for piety, an ardent and refined love of Heaven, has in most, if not in all cases, been kindled by the fury of earthly appetite; and hence the fire of impure imagery, with which delirious raptures have defiled the altars of religion, and disgraced the loftiest conceptions of the soul. The mingling with the sacred name of that Being, who is to be served with adoration and zeal, such sensations as produced the transports of the holy CATHERINE, and the fainted fervour of ARMELLE, almost tempt us to pronounce them lunatics and blasphemers.

blasphemers. But for this sensual origin of her enthusiasm, ARMELLE would not have declared the heavenly object of her aspirations had so kindled her soul with the fervour of his love, that within and without she was all fire and flame. Her pious biographer, a French Ursuline, says, after her own words, "that the arrow of her beloved  
" had pierced her heart; therefore she sighed,  
" and languished, and panted after him day and  
" night. Her soul had mounted so beyond human  
" desire, and human imagination, that she  
" would have been deemed insane by every worldly  
" and profane observer, who had witnessed the  
" pious wildness of her transports; and beheld her  
" when she could not hold to her embrace the  
" divine lover, by whom her heart was wounded  
" and inflamed, rushing from room to room, eager  
" to overtake and detain him. Frequently she  
" called on him with all her might, and her passion  
" burst forth in words and actions, which, to  
" the apprehension of the profane world, exceeded  
" the limits of reason: but they did not exceed  
" the bounds of her love. Sometimes she clasped  
" and pressed to her heart, every substance that  
" offered itself to her fond researches; pillars,  
" ballusters, and other insensible objects, as if she  
" sought to incorporate them with her very soul,  
" exclaiming, 'Do you not contain my beloved?  
" Oh! give me my beloved, if you contain him!'

" She

"She would rush into the fields on the eager  
 " wings of her fervent aspirations, demanding from  
 " men, and cattle, and trees, the only one after  
 " whom her heart longed and languished. So  
 " full was she of passion, so devoured with eager  
 " wishes for the possession of her beloved, that she  
 " would have thrown herself with joy into the  
 " depths of the ocean, nay would have shot swifter  
 " than a falling star into the abyss of hell itself,  
 " and braved all its tortures and horrors with  
 " ecstacy, to have inhaled with all her senses the  
 " ravishing sound—Lo ! he, whom thou seekest,  
 " is HERE !"

BUT for the secret stings of sensuality, JOAN of  
*Cambray*, and ANGELINA of *Pohgny*, would not  
 have pictured the object of their celestial love as  
 possessed of those enchanting attributes, immortal  
 youth, and transcendant beauty ; nor would MA-  
 TILDA of *Saxony* have asserted, that the idol of her  
 divine desires had rendered himself sensible to her ;  
 had kissed her with lips of love, and whispered in  
 thrilling accents, " Oh ! my beloved, lay me to  
 " thy heart, and receive all the fruits of my ten-  
 " derness !"

WITHOUT this sensual instigation, MARIA of  
 the *Incarnation* would not have exclaimed, " Oh !  
 " my divine love, my soul is united to thine, and

“ I mingle my ardours with the fires of thy en-  
 “ kindled heart. I languish, I expire, and ex-  
 “ piring, revive to new senses of existence. Oh !  
 “ my beloved will consume me in his celestial  
 “ caresses ! He is as a devouring and dissolving  
 “ fire of ecstasy ; he is as a precious ointment,  
 “ and I perish in the sweetness of his embrace !”

HAD not similar emotions accompanied her religious aspirations, MARY MAGDALEN *of Pazzis* had not continued, all her senses suspended, in trances of insensibility, till the holy presence of her heavenly lover shed itself through her whole frame, and quickened her to animation. She would not have leaped from her couch, seized her companion's hands in wild tumults of agitation, and cried, in a voice smothered with emotion, “ Come, Sister ; come, fly with me, in pursuit of  
 “ my lover ! Aid me with the melody of thy  
 “ lips to allure him to me !” Surely without sensations, which we usually consider as impure, she would not have exclaimed, with convulsive throbs and heavings, “ Love ! Love ! Love ! Ah !  
 “ no more love ! its penetrating rays consume  
 “ me !”

A SIMILAR fury of sensual inclination, filled with voluptuous images the sleeping and waking dreams of the holy CATHARINE *of Siena*, and irritated her  
 luxurious

luxurious fancy with such unchaste thoughts as could finally be contented only by a mystic marriage with her divine lover. To what other cause can we impute all that Italian fervour, that almost Otaheitean wantonness of imagery, which enlivens and profanes the devotion of the mystic nuns? What other interpretation can we assign to their licentious ravings, of agitations, desires, languishings, raptures; and all the Bacchio rout of wild emotions, that fill the trains of corporeal love.

MARY of the Incarnation confesses, with decent but intelligible reserve, that there are certain noxious exhalations of impurity and unrighteousness, proceeding from the corruption of our vitiated nature, which but too frequently insinuate themselves into the imagination of the pious nun, and taint her devout desires with the foulness of earthly appetite; and she cautions her godly sisters against them, as more dangerous than the Devil himself to the chastity and purity of their souls.

It is not difficult to understand this confession; it is impossible not to applaud it. Such subtle confusion of celestial and earthly passion, must have entangled every young and susceptible female, whose warmth of constitution, perhaps restrained from commerce with an earthly lover, sought an indemnity in an amour with Heaven.



Love is so equivocal and variable a thing ; on one side it is so allied to all the fairest and noblest affections of the soul, while on the other, it communicates with the basest appetites and necessities of the body ; so strongly does it affect, and is it affected, by the state of the nerves, and the temperature of the blood, that a simple and uninformed girl cannot be expected to separate her feelings for a spiritual object from all emotions of earthly origin ; nor is it reasonable to suppose that, when all the force and fury of passion are let loose after an unknown and abstract being, the imagination should not invest him in the forms and qualities most familiar and dear to it ; and, feeding the apprehension with worldly images, fill the heart with worldly sentiments and wishes. These must produce correspondent emotions on the human frame ; and then the saintly love of the mystic nun becomes only the voluptuous dream of a wanton. The once favourite indulgencies and ancient gratifications of ether appetites, infested the fancy, and adulterated the piety of others of these devout voluptuaries ; and St. GERTRUDE of *Saxony* exclaimed with an appetite perhaps more equivocal, but not less amorous, " Oh ! joy above all delight, " to be feasted with the confections of God's grace ; " and be so replenished with the rich potions of " his love, that the soul bursts with the excess of " its contentment ! "

ARMELLE

ARMELLE NICHOLAS, the grand luminary of French sanctity, was a peasant by birth, and, as we are given to understand by her admirer and historian, the Ursuline sister, from whom all my knowledge of her is derived, till exalted to the calendar of Saints, never figured in a higher sphere than that of a scullion. This pious sister informs us that a little lacquey, prompted by the inquisitiveness common to his age and station, having peeped through the key-hole of the kitchen-door, to pry into the private occupations of ARMELLE, beheld her engaged in the humble office of spitting a capon. But surely never was a capon prepared for the table in a manner so illustrious! ARMELLE, with the instrument and subject of her functions in her hand, was raised several feet above the floor, and suspended in a Divine glory, while her face shone so transcendantly bright with the reflection of celestial love, that (as we are told by the credulous historian) the astonished and ravished boy, enamoured of the beauty and splendour of religion, renounced the pomps and vanities of the world and entered into a monastery.

ARMELLE was formed in seclusion; her most social scene was the kitchen, and there her chief communion was with its furniture. When a child,

she derived an ineffable delight from reciting an *Ave* or *Paternoster*; and while occupied in tending the flocks, her original employment, she would amuse herself the whole day in telling her rosary. In this pastoral state of simplicity and ignorance, she made great advances in holy love; for, says her Ursuline biographer, "when first introduced to the sight of a crucifix, her heavenly desires poured forth with fervent abundance: she eagerly kissed, embraced, and caressed the image, while streams of tenderness rushed from her eyes."

BUT what may appear no less strange to the religious, than ridiculous to the reflective reader, is, that ARMELLE NICHOLAS, the flower and gem of French sanctity, had impulses neither faint nor transient, of the brutal and sinful lusts of the flesh: her pious biographer relates that the heart of ARMELLE was once, during two entire years, absolutely void of the love of God; and that while this interregnum of sacred affection continued, she burnt with so sinful and hellish a fire; her imagination was filled with such lewd and horrid fancies; and her heart the prey of such lustful and vile desires; that ARMELLE, the fairest and most glorious of Saints, sunk beneath the depravity of the most sordid and abject sinners.

It

It is to be lamented, perhaps, that sensual and spiritual love have a common origin, and maintain a ready communication through many kindred qualities: it is not strange, therefore, that the transition should be frequent from carnal love to heavenly, and from divine to human. Perhaps there never was a susceptible, ardent, and enthusiastic man, whose desires aspired to a celestial spouse, who could constantly sustain them from dropping to rest on some earthly bridegroom. It appears indeed impossible, that with inflamed passions and imaginations incessantly strained in associating sensible and enticing forms with abstract and spiritual affections, nature, custom, and reason, should not have prevailed over mystical extravagance: that by this means, emotions, which when addressed to a Superior Power, were indecorous, profane, and impious, should at last recur to man, whom alone they could benefit, and by whom they were originally inspired.

BUT whatever may be urged against the follies and vices which too abundantly flow from the abuses of mysticism and Solitude, the former must be allowed in certain cases to possess an aspect of beauty and grandeur; its illusions, embellished and vivified by the rich and glowing eloquence and lively imagination of the gentle and seductive

FENELON,

FENELON,\* must fascinate every one whose heart is imbued with a taste, and animated with a passion, for virtue. Among the mystics of the Romish Church, we find the most unequivocal instances of magnanimous self-denial; of indefatigable patience and mild humility; nay, even of active and heroic benevolence: but though it has sometimes borne these happy fruits; though it has occasionally, in spirits of extraordinary temper, been made productive of the highest virtues, and proved the surest antidote to the vices which most easily infect, and most pertinaciously adhere to human frailty, we must still regard it in its general operation, as a copious source of error, extravagance, and phrensy; as diverting the mind from the knowledge of the true nature and proper scene of its duties; and deluding it, by an unnatural mixture of misguided voluptuousness, fallacious philosophy, and visionary piety, to disobey the lessons of reason, and desert the services of humanity, for shadows of unsubstantial pleasure and nominal virtues, as unacceptable to the Deity as unprofitable to his works.

A MELANCHOLY temper and gloomy imagi-

\* Lord Peterborough said to Pope, after his visit to the Archbishop of Cambray: "I found him a delicious creature; but I harried from him as fast as I could, lest he should have made  
" a Saint of me."

nation,

nation, as they were generally the causes which forced the Egyptian devotees into the horrors of religious Solitude, were confirmed and increased by that austere seclusion from the joys and recreations of Society; yet some of its advocates have confidently affirmed that the celebrated ANTONY, and all the other owls of superstition, who filled the deserts of *Thebais* and *Nitria*, were lively companions, joyous spirits, and in a word, of a gaiety and cheerfulness unalterable. There might be some few anchorets indeed, who, like the younger MACARIUS, maintained an amenity of deportment; and by the charms of their serene and easy temper, threw a light over the general gloom of the monastic condition; and by this means tempted some youthful enthusiasts to partake of its solemnity, whom otherwise its sadness and severity would have appalled. Neither can it be denied that when the fancy is wholly possessed with any favourite idol of its enthusiasm, and the passions are thereby sufficiently awakened, amused, and kept in employment, Solitude is a powerful preservative against discontent, vexation, and chagrin. Years sail by unperceived, while the mind, occupied with ideas and objects, to which its love and admiration are fondly attached, is not, in the dedication of all its energies to their service and enjoyment, disturbed by the importunity of company, the demands of business, or the urgency of distress.

A MODERN

A MODERN instance shall be quoted to shew how powerfully fanaticism acts to the expulsion of the sorrows it generates. The famous WHITFIELD, after having long suffered under the heavy oppression of religious melancholy, solicited the more celebrated WBSLEY, the founder of Methodism, to receive him into the number of his disciples. The remedy succeeded to admiration: WHITFIELD was restored to ease and cheerfulness, and shone happy and exulting, the rival of the religious luminary, at whose brighter lamp he had rekindled the impaired light of his waning faith.

But though many more instances should be urged of the happy effects of fanatical zeal in dissipating the aguish clouds of superstitious languor, there would still remain a host of examples and facts, flagrant and palpable to the reason of all, to prove the fallacy of any supposition, that the enthusiasts of the Egyptian deserts were miracles of tranquillity, cheerfulness, and content; and to convince the pious obstinacy of the most confirmed adorers of solitary sanctity, that the tendency to seclusion is generally the offspring of a melancholy temper of soul, which in its turn is for the most part fostered and kept alive by the unsocial habits it generates.

An unreasonable and ungovernable propensity  
to

to Solitude is one of the most general and unequivocal symptoms of melancholy; all those whose feelings are a prey to images of chagrin, regret, and disappointment, shun the light of heaven, and the aspect of man; incapable of attaching themselves to any ideas but those which torment and destroy them, they fly the necessity of efforts at once painful and ineffectual. Yet thus giving themselves up to retirement, they are abandoned, in a manner still more helpless and unguarded, to the consumer of their happiness and peace, unless the imagination is impressed with some new and powerful bias. Much indeed is effected, when the gloomy mind can be induced to shift the objects of its reflections, and give welcome and entertainment to a new species of expectation and desire. To this end, persons of a melancholy habit should be frequently taught to regard life as various in its enjoyments; and being weaned from the belief, that any single pleasure is indispensable to content and happiness, they should be animated to rise from one disappointment to the pursuit of other hopes, more easily attainable. If the sufferer can by such means be withdrawn from the spot in which his sadness originates, and attached to other scenes, his gloomy cast of thought will probably yield to serenity and cheerfulness; though a disposition to relapse into dejection will perhaps always remain, being generally deeply implanted in the

very



very stamina of those minds, in which circumstances, moral or physical, permanent or incidental, provoke it to disclose itself. If a contrary regimen be pursued, and the dispirited heart be encouraged to decline all exercises, occupations, and pleasures, to fix its faculties upon the mournful fear or bitter disappointment, which corrodes its peace, and preys upon the vitals of its happiness; it will sink deeper and deeper in despondency and despair, till the strength of nature is exhausted and broken, and the misery of the soul terminates in madness or death.

AN Englishman, when melancholy, shoots himself; a melancholy Frenchman used to turn Carthusian: the causes in both were the same: the effects did not greatly differ; and perhaps the English hypochondriasts would not destroy themselves, if there were any monastic institutions among them to offer a living tomb to their sorrows.

WHEN sickness and melancholy have relaxed all the elasticity of the soul, and corroded and broken the springs of its activity and vigour, it loses all love of Society, and shrinks into the deep and gloomy void of Solitude. In all the various species of melancholy, no symptom is so uniform and immovable as the desire of quitting the presence of

men ; of renouncing all relations and all duties regarding them ; and of forbearing to see, converse, or in any manner communicate with them. The knot, that fastens all the snares of Seclusion, is its tendency to fascinate the suffering mind, and to raise an aversion against all the interruptions which might assist in detaching it from the emotions by which it is tortured and consumed. From a knowledge of this effect, we may suppose it is, that the tribe of voluntary advisers and directors of consciences and conducts are, with misplaced officiousness, always reiterating in the ear of the victim of melancholy, that he should frequent theatres and masquerades ; visit clubs and assemblies ; amuse himself with cards and dice ; or endeavour in the charms of a mistress to rekindle his passions, and enliven his spirits.

MELANCHOLY is a habit in the mind of seeing only the unfavourable side of every alternative, and presaging the unhappy termination of every occurrence : the operation of this habit, aggravated by an irritable and morbid state of feeling, fills the soul with constant uneasiness and chagrin, and renders the lightest effort, the smallest disappointment, or most trivial injury, insupportable. The dejected man avoids all company which does not leave him wholly at liberty ; which restricts the few indulgences he is yet possessed of, or imposes  
upon

upon him exertions in the least degree fatiguing. Rather than face the salutary but harsh repellents of his disease, he withdraws to the solitude which foment and enrages it; instead of enlightening the gloom of his despondency, by regarding with a favourable eye all that gives life a value with men of happier disposition, he labours only to encrease the gloom that incloses him; he accumulates new funds of melancholy; by analysing the enjoyments of the cheerful and contented, only to depreciate and pervert them into grievances and torments to himself.

It is a gross error to suppose the most effectual antidote to melancholy is to be found in licentious and continual dissipation: on the contrary, many sink into dejection and sadness, only because they cannot obtain the freedom and quiet they incessantly languish to enjoy. How often does the man of placid and pensive disposition lose all relish of the world, and conceive, perhaps, an utter distaste for its pleasures, for no other reason than that, engrossed by its business and entertainment, he has no leisure to collect his thoughts, or settle his reflections? Others, whose characters are marked by gloom and inquietude, cannot endure the intercourse of those whose frigid, unfeeling hearts, understand not their unobtrusive griefs. How few are there, whose lively sympathy leads them to discover

discover when a fellow-creature suffers; and points out to their compassion the thorn which pierces the heart of their brother! As those rigid beings whom a fortunate concurrence of circumstances has armed with a constant, and, as it were, invulnerable health, know not how to compassionate the subtle, but keen, agonies, which shake the nerves of the valetudinarian, till Nature, with convulsive movements, proclaims the pangs that prey upon and destroy him; so those whom unvaried prosperity, or a naturally hardened heart, has secured from the sharp wounds of affliction, or the secret canker of chagrin, never discern the advances of Melancholy till her miserable victim has been goaded into the arms of Suicide. How often does it happen, that the unfortunate wretch who is delivered to this most terrible of nature's calamities, while his daily associates and friends, (as the courtesy of the world terms them,) never suspect his misery, is hourly racked with more than the torments of the damned; which he finally braves to release himself from the intolerable burthen of present anguish.

It is indeed possible to wear, to the indifferent and inattentive croud, an aspect of composure, and even gaiety, at the instant the heart is overwhelmed with woe, and crushed under the load of existence. An harlequin so full of whim, frolic, and vivacity,

as the famous CARLINI, never shook with laughter the Parisian theatres : he almost killed his spectators with merriment. A French physician, being consulted by a person who described himself subject to attacks of melancholy the most gloomy and cruel, advised him to indulge himself in innocent pleasures, and amuse his reflections by scenes of diversion and gaiety. "Frequent the Italian comedy," said he ; your distemper must be rooted indeed, if the lively CARLINI does not expel it." "Alas !" exclaimed the patient, "I am CARLINI myself ; and, while I fill Paris with mirth and cheerfulness, perish of melancholy and chagrin."

Yet however unhappy the victim of dejection may find himself in company with those who neither sympathise with, nor understand his sufferings, yet they cannot but be aggravated and augmented in solitude. An immoderate attachment to any subject that depresses the spirits, and darkens the imagination, renders retirement the mortal foe of the repose and peace, of which it is courted as the protector ; it thus covers the siege with which melancholy and despair undermine our fortitude and happiness. That self-converse, to which the mind is so prone at such times to surrender itself, is under these circumstances ever the worst and most dangerous of resources ; it disappoints our hopes, betrays our confidence, and, instead of  
screening

screening us from the thoughts which war against our quiet and content, delivers us unarmed and defenceless to their implacable enmity.

A MAN, though otherwise bold and enterprising by constitution and habit, grows timid and receding, in proportion to the inroads of melancholy, which make him shrink from the competition and even the presence of his fellows. It offends him that the sun is gay and glorious in the heavens; he hails the gloom of twilight as a congenial retreat, and is never so calm as when the hours are deformed with rain and tempest. He dreads going abroad like death; if he quits his home, he wishes neither to see nor be seen by a human creature; and when he is forced to enter the haunts of men, he seeks to cover himself under the cloak of darkness. His abode is kept in a perpetual gloom; he is never tranquil but when shut up from the sight and converse of mankind: and the annunciation of a visit sounds to him like a sentence to the stake. A summons to a social entertainment wounds him to the very soul, and his heart grows sick within him when the officious kindness of his friends, to divert his sadness, tears him for a few moments from that retirement which he persists in cherishing and caressing; while its corrosive tooth is working its way to his heart.

ROUSSEAU, in the latter part of his life, fled the intercourse of society, in the persuasion that all orders and classes of men had conspired his ruin; and that the whole of Europe was in arms to destroy him. Yet pursued by opposition wherever he went; chased from France, which he had distinguished by his writings; from Geneva, his birth-place, and the object of his love; exiled from Berne with indignity; expelled, not without some injustice, from Neuchâtel; and hastily banished from his peaceful retreat in the Lake of Bienne; it cannot be said that his fears were altogether groundless, or the mere forgeries of his melancholy fancy: nor is it therefore just to consider him as a morose or insane misanthrope. Every physician, however, who studies the history of Rousseau, will plainly perceive that the seeds of dejection, sadness, and hypochondriacism, were sown in his frame of mind and temper; and that the fibres of melancholy were intermixed with the most tender and sensitive of his nerves. He had suffered the keenest agonies of the most excruciating disorders to which the human frame is incident; he had endured all the stings and stabs of envy and malice, which exulted in his poverty, his sickness, and misery. It has been said that he was persecuted not so much for the novelty or impropriety of his sentiments, as for the unrivalled power and lustre

lustre of his eloquence,\* of his talents, and fame, did not scruple to assume the disguise of bigotry and intolerance; and with a strange inconsistency, which might well be thought to mark the real cause of their opposition, they raised outcries against the freedom of his religious opinions, in places where VOLTAIRE was an object of admiration, and where atheism might be called the creed of the learned and the powerful. Harassed by the austerity of fortune and the invidious enmity of men, whose sympathy, kindness, gratitude, and veneration, he had hoped for, are we to wonder that the cheerfulness of his disposition, and the kindness of his heart, yielded at length to a sickly irritability and saturnine moroseness of sentiment; which deformed in his sight all the actions even of his friends, and vitiated his temper while it corroded his happiness? Every one is eager to exclaim ROUSSEAU was a misanthrope, a madman; but few are charitable enough to recollect that he was a valetudinarian in health, and a hypochondriac by constitution. Allowing nothing for the attack of human injustice and cruelty; nothing for the torments of penury; nothing for the ravages of sickness; the bloom and vigour of his genius is for-

\* Non propter dogmatum novitatem, nec propter hæresim, ut nunc adversus eum simulant; sed quia gloriam eloquentiæ ejus et scientiæ ferre non poterant, et illo docente omnes muti putabantur.



gotten : he is by many judged only from the work dictated by his fears, distresses, and sufferings; when the infirmities of age had conspired with the acutest bodily pains, and the excess of mental anguish, to overpower his reason, pervert his sensibility, and transform him almost utterly from his original self. No one has regarded this melancholy and frightful piece as exhibiting, at the base of ROUSSEAU'S grandeur, a melancholy and deplorable example of the abjectness of Human Nature; which, in its most exalted instances, is so little able to sustain its dignity and erectness, when oppressed by the malice of fortune and the cruelty or ingratitude of mankind.

AN exquisite sensibility of nerves, an ungovernable vehemence of imagination, when set in motion by sickness, or by sorrow, turn all the powers of the mind against itself, and wear it out by its own vigour and activity. Even Envy and Calumny would be moved to pity, did they but witness the soul-piercing and unremitting pangs with which the successful suitors of fame have purchased their hated pre-eminence : did they but know the hours of languor, incapacity, and despondence, under which their faculties labour, and their hopes wither and perish ; did they but look on, while the man of genius, the least unfortunate of his tribe, writhes in the anguish of unmerited disappointment,

disappointment, or lies supine beneath the oppression of the maladies which his studies, his fatigues, and his anxieties have produced; these vices would forego their nature and contend with Pity and Charity for the offices of alleviation and solace. The great HALLER, toward the close of his life, was bowed to the earth by a profound melancholy; which, unless counteracted by the immoderate use of opium, chained down his faculties and broke all his fortitude. His gloomy and desolate state of mind opened beneath him a yawning abyss, from which the demoniac forms of Superstition continually ascended, to storm his conscience with the reproach of theological errors; and to menace him with eternal and unmitigable punishments, for involuntary deviations from the austere orthodoxy.

DREADFUL as is this oppression of soul, even when relieved by intermissions, during which the spirits resume their cheerfulness, and the heart rallies all its firmness, its gloom appears as a shining brightness, when compared with that total and dreadful overthrow of the faculties which shuts out the soul from every allurements of pleasure, from every promise of hope: and which, leaving the heart a prey to the bodings of fear, and the taunts of scorn, besieges it with unremitting torments. The wretch, delivered to this accumu-

lation of all human miseries, impatient in company, is yet incapable of enjoying retirement; though he hastens from the insufferable importunity and supposed enmity of the world to his chamber, yet there he is tormented with disgust and loathing at every luxury and accommodation that may offer itself to repose and comfort him. His books strike his sight as so many vessels fraught with doubts and perplexities, fitted to harass and distract his intellect, and rend his brain with feverish phrensy. He abhors the attentions of his friends; he repels their visits, and commits their letters to the flames unread. Every encomium, whether written or spoken, on the worth of his character, or the utility and beauty of his writings, he regards as an insolent mockery of his sufferings. He is no less callous to the impressions of envy and hatred, than inattentive to the mild and gentle breath of affection and respect. The outcries of the ignorant and prejudiced, the sneers of the supercilious, the contumelies of the insolent, the wrongs of the jealous, the rancour of the envious, the ruin of his fortune, the degradation, pollution, and wreck of his name; none of these make the least impression on his mind, devoured by the fiercer corrosion of melancholy and anguish; in the gall of which he is ever steeped, and which feed on his peace with unrelenting malignity. The sublimest and most delicate productions of  
nature;

nature, or the most exquisite efforts of art, to him contain no charm, nor impart more comfort than music to a condemned criminal. His eyes acquire no lustre, his heart receives no solace from the balmy dews of sleep; to him the new-fledged day brings no healing on its wings; the sacred beam of Heaven's replenished light penetrates him with no glad emotion; he rises from his couch only to renew his misery, and be again extended on the rack of despair. \*

THE melancholy are apt to conceive it an aggravation of their misery, that they are compelled by their necessities and duties to exertion and intercourse with their fellow-creatures, and withheld from dedicating themselves to Solitude and inactivity. But this compulsion, where it takes place, is his very friend and guardian, and preserves the hypochondriac from the destructive excess and constancy of sadness and anguish which would otherwise ultimately destroy him. Leisure and Solitude, to the imagination clouded by sorrow and despondence, do not expel, but on the contrary increase and aggravate, the evil they are fondly employed to eradicate.

SOLITUDE renders religious melancholy an earthly hell; for the imagination is thus suffered to dwell, uninterruptedly, on the terrific apprehension

hension so inseparable from this sickness of the mind, that the soul is abandoned of God, and an outcast from Divine mercy; a fear that not only drives the unhappy object of this dangerous malady from the presence of mankind, but instigates him to shun, if it were possible, the aspect of God himself. This deplorable imbecility of the mind never fails to collect additional ills in quiet and retirement; particularly if it is tampered with by priests, and those who term themselves directors or advisers of the conscience; and who, mistaking the effects of irritated and deranged nerves, for the secret practices and machinations of the devil, idly hope to eradicate what should be considered merely as corporeal maladies, by the application of texts of Scripture: these generally, by their ignorance, bigotry, and presumption, establish the disease they labour to remove; and by their rash and injudicious interference, infuse new venom into the wound they profess to cure. Yet there have appeared divines of enlightened and discerning minds, such as LUTHER, TILLOTSON, and CLARKE, who have confirmed the observation, that superstitious gloom ever grows darker and assumes new horrors in seclusion; and they impressively warn its victims against seeking privacy as an asylum from this wretched infirmity.

BUT though Solitude is the usual parent of this  
worst

worst of ills, it sometimes suddenly appears in persons who have never lived in a sequestered manner. I once visited a young female whose mind was alienated, by a severe fit of sickness, from all relish of the delights and amusements of youth; she thence sunk into a sad and querulous habit of compunctious lamentation, and wasted her faculties and ruined her peace, by an incessant inquiry after sin in those actions and principles of her life, where no image of offence was to be found. This distemper of the soul evidently owed its rise to the indisposition of the body, and originated in the gloomy associations conducted into the mind by the impressions of pain and disease: thus a superstitious melancholy, which reached almost to madness, caused by a conjunction of unfavourable circumstances, during the confinement of pregnancy, was presented to my observation in the person of a handsome, gay, and lively coquet. She was daily attacked by paroxysms of absolute insanity, in which she lost all sense of her actual condition, and continued to exclaim, with every sign of distraction and horror, that "her perdition was accomplished, and hell was closing on her!" These fits occurred several times in the day, were preceded and attended by violent fever, and were, finally, with all their frightful and gloomy train of superstitious phantoms, dispelled by the assistance of medicine.

It

It is but a short time since I beheld all the symptoms which forerun religious melancholy, in a person of quiet temper and recluse habits, and to whom nothing was wanting but an ignorant and bigotted priest, to have plunged her in irretrievable sorrow and despondency. A young lady of high rank, whom all the luxury and pomp of her station had not attached to the dissipations of the world, but who lived much in voluntary retirement from its pleasures, consulting me more as a friend than physician, declared, that whenever left to herself, and even when in company, if she but closed her eyes, she seemed to behold swarms of demons in every corner of the apartment. She had suffered long and repeated illnesses, and I had attended her through a succession of complaints, the last of which settled into a profound melancholy, the joint product of them all. Inquiring with cordial concern, whether she found these foes of her peace succeed, or labour in corrupting her heart? she answered; "Not at all; but they terrified her by the grimness of their looks and gestures."—"My good lady," I returned, "these frightful spectres are the creatures of illusion. Your fancy is disordered by the long sufferings of your frame: such evil spirits are to be chased away by medicine, and health will replace them with angels."—Had she confided the anxiety of her mind, not to her physician, but her

her confessor ; and had he, ascribing these gloomy visions to the artifices of the tempter, resorted to spiritual weapons to repel them, and fed her gloom with pious exercises and holy penitence, it is to be feared that the melancholy humour would have established itself in her character, and she would have been encompassed with demons to the end of her life.

My heart even at this instant shudders at the recollection of that mournful apartment, in which I, many years since, used to visit a lady of high birth and splendid station, once distinguished for the cheerfulness of her temper, the vivacity of her wit, the quickness and activity of her intellect, the frankness and sprightliness of her manners, and even for her coquettish though innocent levity. The room to which she confined herself was artificially darkened through the day, and on her Soul a gloom the most impenetrable constantly rested. At every visit she told me, " She was an outcast  
" from the mercy of God, a link severed from the  
" chain of redeemed existence, a wretch created  
" for damnation : that in her calmest hours she  
" existed in an intolerable hell, but in her dark  
" and turbid moments every instant transfixed her  
" with the keenest torments of perdition." During one whole year she persisted in this dismal seclusion,  
2 exhausting



exhausting herself in continual supplications to Heaven ; or alarming herself by conferences with her ghostly director, an intemperate priest, who had been recommended to her by her husband ; a most sanctified man, and whose temper and principles were originally but very little congenial with her own. His superstitious jargon served only to exasperate her melancholy ; her fancy became daily troubled with new terrors ; and every friend presaged the speedy extinction of her reason in the direst despair ; when all at once these dreadful phantoms dispersed like an hideous dream, on her happening one day to surprise her husband in a situation with her waiting-maid, rather too familiar for so grave and devout a personage. This discovery chased away all her doubts, terrors, and anguish ; and restored her with miraculous suddenness to reason, cheerfulness, and gaiety. Her mirth indeed sometimes overstepped the modesty of reason ; and this was the sole unfavourable symptom to be discerned in her altered manners. She laughed at her recent horrors ; derided the gloomy interment she had so long cherished ; treated all the actions and feelings of the last year as the wild offspring of an infirm intellect and sickly fancy, and busied her mind in the formation of a rational plan for the conduct of her future life. This favourable state continued three days ;  
but

but alas! the fourth brought with it a phrensy which no time or cares have ever dispelled or mitigated.

IN my early days I had frequent occasion to observe how naturally, in Solitude, the most rationally pious sink into religious melancholy; to which they are far less prone in scenes of business and pleasure, where the mind occupied by human concerns, and engaged by a vicissitude and variety of objects, resists more successfully the fascination of any one, however powerful or seductive. Yet experience teaches that this fatal malady will invade and subjugate even characters stored with science, strengthened with talents, and assisted by the advantages of a society at once select and numerous; all these advantages have proved an inadequate defence against the defects of an ungoverned habit of speculation, the continual tho' silent operation of a melancholy temperament, and the ruinous and wasteful action of a stern and gloomy superstition.

WE have already alluded to the unfortunate cloud which overshadowed the last days of the celebrated HALLER: for the four latter years of his life he sunk into a religious despondency that robbed him of all enjoyment, and almost of all the functions of life. Through the whole of that period

period he ceased to exist, or existed in misery, whenever he was not occupied by the pen or engaged in his studies. In consequence of ill-health, he had gradually habituated himself to an excessive use of opium; and at last, by the violent application of that powerful drug, maintained himself in continual fluctuation between a state of mind unnaturally elevated, and the saddest dejection of spirits. I saw this great man, about two years before his dissolution, when plunged in the depths of the most dreary melancholy. His passion for glory excepted, (which no terrors, human or divine, could depress, or in the minutest degree diminish,) he had no desire or solicitude but for the continual presence of ecclesiastics. He endeavoured to be always surrounded by them; at some times procuring the sagest and most enlightened; at others, without discrimination or choice, all that were to be collected.

HALLER had embraced the most rigorous tenets of Christianity; but which it appears were, by a temper harsh and perhaps obstinate, aggravated to asperity and sternness, instead of affording that mild support and consolation which they yield to others. A few days before his death, he addressed a letter to his great and good friend, the celebrated HEYNE of *Gottingen*, in which, standing as he then could not but conceive himself, his age  
and

and infirmity considered; on the very brink of eternity, he professed his firm belief of the unbounded mercy of his Creator and Judge; but fearfully expressed his doubts that this infinite goodness might fall short of the immense extent of his sins, the vast accumulation of seventy years of error, frailty, and transgression. His purpose in writing was, to request that HEYNE would inquire for him of his friend, the profound theologian, LESS, what short treatise he might yet procure that would aid to arm him against the terrors of his approaching dissolution. He concluded his epistle abruptly, promising to state any changes that might occur in the condition of his terrified and tortured spirit.

WHAT fluctuations and changes succeeded in his mind, whether it assumed a brighter hue of confidence, or became obscured with a total eclipse of hope and faith, he was not permitted to communicate. His death, which almost immediately followed, secured his repose; though for a time, it endangered, what, had he lived, he would have been more solicitous about, his darling reputation. A young noble of Berne, whether actuated by his own malice, or unconsciously instrumental to that of others, affirmed, in a letter to a friend at the University of Gottingen, which was publicly circulated there, that HALLER had, in his

last

last moments, confessed to the numerous divines who attended him, that in spite of his most earnest endeavours at conviction on the subject of revelation and religion, he remained in utter incredulity and uncertainty as to both, without any sure and firm persuasion on which he could venture to rely.

IN spite of these circumstances, we are well persuaded that HALLER doubted no attribute of the Deity, except his mercy; and this was concealed from him, not by the mists of infidelity, but by the melancholy gloom of his disordered mind. He dreaded death with a horror even superstitious; and he did not conceal his dismay: but his fear respected the awfulness of retribution; and, as he used to declare, was imposed on him by his consciousness of the sinful and deplorable corruption of his soul, which he affirmed no exertion of Divine Grace ever could purify and render acceptable. So utterly was he lost, through his lamentable dejection of mind, to a just sense of his own character, and a knowledge of the nature of his God!

HAD HALLER passed his days in abstinence, indolence, and solitude, his mournful propensities would have rapidly hurried him into phrensy: but he was in the habit of much intercourse with the  
great,

great, the learned, and the polite; and while he continually strove to relieve his sadness of mind by the false exhilaration afforded by opium, he also took shelter from its invasion in a strenuous application to the sciences he loved, and had so successfully cultivated. By these means he held at bay the horrible evil that bore down upon him; and which, in defiance of his efforts, would molest and gall him, at those times particularly when he conversed with divines on the condition of his soul; or when he allowed himself to relax from his literary labours.

In certain cases of religious melancholy, Solitude is a rack whereon the imagination binds the Soul to inflict on it incessant tortures. A young Genoese, of elegant manners and cultivated mind, consulted me on the treatment of a nervous malady, the successor and offspring of a long religious melancholy; which, seconded by solitary habits, had acted with dreadful hostility and devastation both on his constitution and faculties. He had, while a youth, addicted himself to a practice too common in seminaries of the present age, nor probably less frequent in those of former times, though the medical tribe, previous to *Tissot*, had not thought proper to make it the subject of publick animadversion. He long pursued the baneful indulgence, unconscious of its nature or effects, without ap-

parent injury to his health or alarm to his conscience. In the space of three or four years however, his constitution began to manifest traces of injury, and his scruples of conscience were suddenly roused in full force by the casual information he received from a companion, that the practice was considered as a sin most unnatural in the opinion of men, and impious in the sight of Heaven. This denunciation struck with consternation and horror, a mind naturally impressed with a love of virtue and religious awe. The thought of his transgression at length plunged him into a melancholy, which, having raged many months with the most ruinous violence, subsided into a steady, uniform, and profound sadness, which during four successive years, held him in unremitting dejection, and finally effected the utter destruction of the tone of his nerves, and subjected him to all the evils of that wretched condition.

DURING the terrors of his remorse, he would have sought consolation in prayer, but was restrained by the scrupulous apprehension, that in him religious offices were sacrilegious; with a purity more fastidious than praise-worthy, he believed himself that he sinned against Heaven, whenever he performed any natural and necessary act, in which he could discern or imagine any shadow of offence. Finding at every act of confession,

session, as it was impossible he should not, that he had omitted some of his numberless frailties and transgressions, new terrors of his lost state seized on his soul; and goaded by the dread of his ever-growing perdition, he ran again to the wearied priest with fresh catalogues of guilt and abominations. Like an hypochondriac, who, after insisting on the symptoms of his countless maladies, with tedious and unnecessary profusion of circumstance, still adds postscript to postscript, of the indications he had neglected to specify, the alarmed sinner always found additional crimes and errors unrevealed, to annex to those he had already with superfluous penitence communicated.

At intervals he conjectured that all his fears and anguish were the creations of a disordered spirit, and even joined in laughing with his companions at his own weakness; while at other times he confessed with horror that he was tempted to disengage his mind from its cruel malady, by acts of the criminality of which he could entertain no doubt. He sought relief and consolation in study; but his virtues were not open to his use or attainment: his mind was at last unable to comprehend any idea, however simple; and he experienced a total incapacity and impotence in all his faculties, when he essayed to exert them on the most trifling subject; for he had not a sufficient command of



attention to compute the change due to him from any piece of coin in the common transactions of life.

His superstitious scruples, compunction, and terror, finally fled before the strengthened light of his understanding, and the salutary counsels of some rational and liberal ecclesiastics; with whom he fortunately happened to converse on the points by which the tranquillity of his mind had been disturbed: but he continued for years to suffer inexpressible misery from the deranged and shattered condition of his nerves. It was the labour of months to compose a letter on the most indifferent subject; and though he had conceived no fearful disgust, no angry disdain, no jealous or vindictive hatred of his fellow-creatures; their commerce and presence grew insupportable to him, from the persuasion he obstinately entertained that he was divested of all power of keeping up a rational and pleasing intercourse with them. When any physician or friend, whom he consulted, advised him to free himself from this incapacity of frequenting society, by seeking occasions to mingle with the world, it seemed to him a proposition as absurd and impertinent, as if, when coughing with an asthma, he had been told it was only necessary for him to breathe freely to let himself at ease.

VARIOUS Italian and English physicians exhorted him to try the effects of a sea-voyage; he obeyed their advice, and after six months landed at Riga, in the same deplorable condition in which he had committed himself to the fruitless perils of the ocean. When I was called on to visit him, every gloomy and noxious vapour of superfluous terror was dissipated; but his nerves were still racked by all the excruciating pangs with which human sense can be agonised: yet at times, when his sufferings were occasionally suspended, and his spirits enlivened by any entertainment that suited his inclinations, he was one of the most pleasant companions, the keenest observers, and the deepest reasoners I have ever known.

SOLITUDE indeed was not the original cause of the evils by which this gentleman was afflicted; a fearful and dejected temper, bred by a rigorous piety, first fixed the sufferer in habits of a secluded melancholy; which afterwards increased, and was in its turn exasperated by the decayed state of the nervous system.

It is evident, from these facts, that Solitude is fraught with dangers and mischiefs the most formidable; and that its sway over the imagination is frequently abused, so as to excite the temper, impair the faculties, and destroy the reason. But

it would be a gross perversion of judgment, for that reason to decry retirement as under every circumstance pernicious to the sickly mind. It frequently happens that a disturbed and inflamed imagination can only be composed and cooled in the quiet and salutary repose afforded by seclusion; and it would be absurdity itself, to recommend diversions and dissipation to a nervous sufferer, whom every accent he hears shakes almost to dissolution, and whose heart and brain are excruciated by every approach or address, however gentle.

Of the agonies which the gentlest touch inflicts on the fretful nerves of the valetudinarian, the healthy and robust can have no apprehension; and therefore they entertain no sympathy for them. Society should indeed be shunned by those, who having lost their sound and vigorous tone of mind, are agitated and convulsed by every emotion of sense, and every tremor of fancy. In this state nothing is so salutary and healing as the un molested tranquillity to be found in calm and uniform scenes, where the soul may rest free from disturbance, till its sensations are calmed and appeased.

Too well has my own mournful experience qualified me to treat on this subject. When in the hope of re-establishing the firmness of my nerves, relaxed

laxed and broken by intense application, I went to drink the Pyrmont waters; how often did I walk amid multitudes of the elegant and great, whom, in aching stupefaction I ceased to recognise and even perceive? Then the most alluring and volatile coquet no more attracted my notice, than the formal and repulsive dame, wrapped up in the mouldy antiquity of her pedigree; and the discourse of the witty and learned was as uninteresting and irksome as the unmeaning prate of the frivolous and vain. In this miserable impotence of soul, whilst I was seeking a remedy for my own calamities, did a crowd of importunate invalids assail me; some demanding remedies for ails, which a succession of years had incorporated with their constitutions; others persecuting me with complaints of disorders which existed only in their unquiet and disturbed fancies. Tormented with their interruption, I tore myself from all society, with an abrupt and angry violence, and inclosing myself in the silent shade of my chamber, suffered there through the livelong day, the torments of the damned; so agonising to me, in the then fretful and impatient temper of my mind, was the remembrance of the vexations I had escaped.

One day, while my own nervous malady was at its height, I was assailed by a host of fanciful and impertinent hypochondriasts, who, with their reflective

spective physicians, waited upon me for advice; and flunning me with the tedious detail of their chimerical sufferings, detained me the whole day under the scourge of their tormenting lamentations. The succeeding night and morning, my spirits exhausted, my patience tired and overcome, and my sense racked by the furious and obstinate persecution which I considered myself to have endured, I lay in anguish more insupportable than the malice of my bitterest enemies could have inflicted on me.

I YIELDED to the violence of my sufferings, and determined to woo rest rather than pursue recreation: I threw myself upon my couch, directing that I should be denied to every visitor. I lay accordingly as void of motion and thought as an Indian mystic, and alive only to my misery; till I was surprised by the sudden entrance of the Princess ORLOV, accompanied by two other very agreeable Russian ladies, whose conversation and company I was in general accustomed to rank among my highest pleasures. Now however I rose with intemperate vehemence, and insisting on being left alone, cleared the room of the fair intruders. About an hour after I was honoured with a visit from the Prince himself; who seating himself by my couch with the condescending kindness habitual to him, consoled with me in a voice of sympathy,

sympathy, and in a manner the most humane and judicious, on the mournful state of my health. He closed his visit in a manner not a little extraordinary—after having previously hinted that he could not be suspected of any superstitious prejudice, in what he was about to propose as a serviceable check upon the fallies of my irritable moments, he advised me “if ever I found myself  
 “in such a fretful and waspish mood as had governed me, when I so unceremoniously drove  
 “away his Princess and her noble companions,  
 “that I should strive to calm and still the gusts of  
 “passion :” and as an expedient for this purpose, he suggested that while any person was addressing me with good intentions, however averse I might be to his expression of them, instead of violently thrusting my mistaken friend out of the room, I should employ myself more salutarily in mentally reciting *The Lord's Prayer*.

No advice could be better imagined than this exhortation to divert the emotions of impatience, by starting new objects of attention, and turning the mind into another channel. Frequently have I experienced the efficacy of this expedient, and have on numberless occasions recommended it to others, as the most successful method of breaking the fury of the passions, when they roll with a

force too mighty to be suddenly arrested in their career by the infirmity of human resolution. A few weeks after, the Prince, my kind and wise director, consulted me respecting the difficulty he found in conforming to a certain abstemious regimen which I had prescribed to himself and his consort. He inquired what expedient he should employ to suppress those emotions, which young and happy husbands are sometimes apt too much to indulge in, and which I had advised him to restrain. "My Prince," I returned, "no nostrum can surpass your own; whenever the instigations of sense attempt to gain the mastery of reason, you have taught me how to oppose or to foil their fury."

By thus turning our most vehement passions from their direct stream, we evade their current, and are enabled to lead back the temper to that serenity, calm, and stillness, in which Solitude is not a curse and poison to the soul, but a balm and blessing.

It is then far from my intention to assert that Solitude is, in all cases, to be regarded as a corrupt and treacherous friend, or an insidious and cruel enemy of the imagination. Not only does it encourage and excite the fancy, when healthy and vigorous,

vigorous, to its noblest productions and most generous efforts, but it elevates it when dejected, calms it when disturbed, and when disordered tranquillizes and re-settles it. Its misapplication and abuse alone render it, as they may every other moral and natural advantage, bitter in its operation, and mischievous in its consequences. The power of the imagination is unbounded, whether it is made instrumental to our benefit or injury : it is not only a fertile source of pain and pleasure, but by its union with the passions, it is enabled to fill the soul with a world of delights, or load it with anxiety, alarm, and horror. Without the aid of sensation or language, it collects inexhaustible funds of enjoyment and suffering, and with no substantial materials builds and fashions new systems of existence. It can imparate us in visions of all that is beautiful, august, and sublime ; or it can overwhelm us with such measureless horrors as shall render thought a hell to us. As we exert the energies of this faculty to our comfort, pleasure, and improvement, or pervert and degrade them to our depravation and misery, do we either embellish and fertilize life into a rich and delicious scene of delight and felicity, or impoverish and deform it into a dreary and hideous waste. Since therefore the imagination possesses this influence over our happiness, it is among our most important duties  
to



to observe how its influence may be employed for our benefit; and either to renounce Solitude, which the foregoing observations have shewn to be, in certain dispositions, highly unfriendly and dangerous to the diseased fancy, or so to time and regulate its use, as to secure the benign and salutary operation of its virtues.

## CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

## THE ILL EFFECTS OF SOLITUDE ON THE PASSIONS.

**AMONGST** the evils produced by Solitude, it is not the least, that, no longer employed by a variety of objects, unconfined and uncontrolled by the attentions of civility, and the obligations of social charity, the Passions, obeyed, encouraged, and flattered by the Imagination, which lends all its services to embellish and dignify the favourites of the heart, domineer over the soul, with a rage of inquietude and obstinacy of vehemence, which they rarely attain amid the employments or diversions of life.

UNDER the thin and deceitful surface of apparent languor and indifference, the fire of passion glows with volcanic fervour, when the mind yields itself without reserve to the fascination of the hope that has bewitched it; and the imagination, called on to assist its fondness, collects from every quarter fuel to feed the desire that at once excites and consumes the latent energies.

Trust not the seeming humility and submissive  
inertness

inertness of a noble spirit, nor dare provoke its anger, when you behold it sad, lonely, and dejected. Its generous pride and loftiness only sleep; and he who ventures to rouse them with indignity or outrage, like him who confines an elastic body beyond its due limits, exposes himself to a painful or dangerous atonement of his presumption.

MEN of quick sensibility, strong imagination, and inflammable passions, will too generally find that those situations which leave them entirely to their own controul, are full of peril and injury. All our inclinations, our habits, our passions, shut themselves up with us in retirement; where every sentiment, undisturbed and undiverted, engrosses to itself all the susceptibility and energy of the soul. There we live a perpetual prey to the disappointment which has delivered us over to dejection and sorrow; to the grief that has smitten us with the sense of irretrievable loss; or the injury that ever stings our remembrance with indignation and resentment: memory keeps every wound unclosed; and still raising the image of our departed or expected pleasures, keeps the mind in a continual rumination on the pain occasioned by their absence. Whatever has once stamped itself on the fancy, or strongly agitated the nerves, becomes either a spectre that follows the recluse into his privacy with reproach or intimidation, or  
a supporting

a supporting angel who every instant smiles and bestows on him the joys of Elysium.

In the unvaried stillness and stagnation which reign in small and remote country places, too frequently lie buried an acrimony and rage of the passions, rarely observed in great cities. None would suspect that a fierce and devouring flame lurked in the bosom of this seeming composure and apathy, when he beholds the lazy languor which marks the deportment of such as inhabit petty provincial towns; the tedious rotation of uniform dulness which fills up the blank of their barren lives; the mean subterfuges they court to save themselves from the wearisome discontent for ever impending over them; the sleepy and half-frozen current of their spirits; the extreme dearth of their ideas; the avidity with which they resort to the card-table; the transport with which they hurry to any casual diversion or spectacle; the curiosity which hurries them to the window when any unexpected noise interrupts the death-like quiet of their streets; and the patient and indefatigable vigilance with which, from morning to night, they act the spy upon the uninteresting inanity of each other's lives, and chronicle the most trivial and indifferent actions.

BUT to this very scarcity of occupation and sterility

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rility of mind is it owing, that their faintest emotions and most common wishes act with the violence of passions. A hunting-match fills a country gentleman with ecstasy; and his daughter is in despair at having been detained from an assembly. Occurrences which raise no remark, and cause no sensation in the capital, in small towns and villages, throw all classes, from the lord to the cobbler, and the lady of the manor to the dairy-maid, into rapture or convulsions. The petty honours and interests of an obscure borough, or miserable hamlet, excite as fierce rivalry and rancour, as the highest dignities and the richest emoluments of a great state; and there are cases, perhaps, in which ambition, envy, and revenge, rage less fiercely and obstinately in courts than in cottages. CÆSAR, in a journey to Spain, traversing the Alps, passed through a paltry village, the inhabitants of which were few in number, and in a condition the most melancholy and abject. His companions inquired with contemptuous raillery, whether it was possible, that on such a wretched spot, there should be the same emulation, the same thirst of distinction, the same lust of honour and dominion, as animated all the swelling spirits of Imperial Rome? whether, on such a dunghill, there were parties and factions, clients and patrons, with all the relations and passions that sprang out of the riches and glories of the mistress of the earth?

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THEIR doubt betrayed how little they were acquainted with the nature of their species ; and well did the famous answer of the great man rebuke, while it instructed their ignorance. The smallest towns display as much jealousy of pre-eminence, as much envy of fortune, as much impatience of authority, as agitate the towers of the proudest cities ; and though the passions may disclose themselves with less art and effect, they exert themselves with equal virulence. The most trifling omission of homage to the beauty, rank, or accomplishments of the female who regards herself as the luminary of the place, kindles an implacable hatred in her bosom ; while, with the hero or genius of the other sex, the most sportive contention shall rankle in his memory into a mortal resentment.

A CELEBRATED English writer declares that defamation prevails less in the metropolis than in country towns ; and that in these latter the empire of scandal is always in the inverse ratio to the size of the place. In the capital, where pleasures offer themselves in greater abundance ; where the mind is supplied with a greater variety of topics, and dwells on each particular subject with less attachment and passion ; where less exposed to the attacks of discontent and chagrin, it is less prompt to entertain the demons of envy and malice ; there are few who are not satisfied to leave the characters

of their neighbours to the shame of their infirmities and vices, with which they are really marked ; few who nourish spite and rancour, except against those by whom they conceive themselves substantially injured, and seriously offended. But in remote provincial towns, where every thing revolves in a narrow circle, and runs in an unvarying stream ; where the same habitation is tenanted by father and son, to the third and fourth generation, reputations are hung with transmitted flames, and aspersed, age after age, with vices or scandals of inheritance. " I was circumstantially informed," says this writer, speaking of some particular town, " of the frauds and meannesses to which every " opulent family in the neighbourhood owed its " elevation and consequence ; and had I credited " all that was related to me, could not have believed any adjacent estate to be in the hands of " its just and lawful proprietor. I was made acquainted with the amours of coquets and prudes " long mouldered in the grave ; and seriously informed of the disgraces and crimes of persons, " who ages since would have slept in oblivion, " had not their memory been preserved to attach " dishonour to the names of their posterity."

In great cities our resentments and enmities easily escape our remembrance, because the objects of them rarely obtrude on our sight, and are scarcely

scarcely ever forced on our attention. In small towns, on the contrary, the thorn that offends us, is always in the eye; the sense of injury is maintained in eternal vigilance and action. An ancient and over-righteous dame, who dwelt in a petty place in Switzerland, told me that "she did not express any indignation at the wickedness of her neighbours and fellow-citizens, as it was evident to her that remonstrance would be lost upon such incorrigible sinners; but it grieved her to the soul to think she must appear at the resurrection in the company of such wretches."

A COUNTRY magistrate, inflated with lofty notions of his wisdom and power, magnifies his own character with what he subtracts from the merits of those who surround him; and thus invested with fancied pre-eminence, stands, in his own conceit, with the awful majesty of a creator among his works. The want of all liberal and instructive society, the scarcity of knowledge, and abundance of prescriptive prejudices and chartered follies, together with the continual exercise of the attention on trifling objects, conspire to contract the heart and degrade the faculties, but not to subdue the proud or ignoble passions; sordid rapacity, mean envy, and insulting ostentation, rage as fiercely in the stillness of the village, as in the tumult of the capital, or the concentrated selfish-



ness of the monastery. Mutual diffention, bitterness and exasperation, prevail wherever a number of persons are pent within a narrow circle of habits, interests, and pleasures; and it is to be lamented that friendship, concord, sympathy, and social virtue, are almost inevitably excluded from cloisters and all kinds of solitary institutions. Envy, jealousy, suspicion, and hatred, are the too frequent residents of the convent, when any object of contention, a little immunity, a petty privilege, or paltry distinction, converts the whole flock of Christ into a herd of famished wolves, eager to rend and devour each other.

CONVENTUAL regulations direct that every nun shall live with her sisters in peace, charity, and such affectionate concord as becomes the common servants of Christ: but it was with more compassion than surprise, that when visiting, in my professional character, any of these establishments, I beheld the deep trenches engraved on the countenances of some nuns by chagrin; on those of others by envy the most restless, or malice the most watchful and unrelenting: some few indeed, as yet strangers to those gloomy and angry passions, had their countenances unimpaired by the traces of those dreadful passions, and shone with innocence, gentleness, and sensibility. With what concern did I reflect upon the sufferings and tor-

ments through which these last would probably proceed, till long rumination on blasted hopes, interdicted happiness, and unprovoked wrongs, should have exchanged their milk for gall; till continually suffering by the corrosion of the vindictive passions in others, their own dispositions would become perverted, and their features deformed into an emulous resemblance of the furies, with whom they then afforded so amiable a contrast! Delivered over to the tyranny of a superior, or the envy of a companion, enraged that another should be less miserable than herself, the devoted victim of the convent retires at the stated period from their joint persecutions: but, bearing the sting in her soul, the gloomy Solitude in which she buries herself, serves only to exasperate the wound which thus fosters and rankles in her bosom. The retrospect of her life shews her a sacrifice to superstitious prejudices or plans of family aggrandisement; to the rapacious designs of a dishonest guardian or an unnatural brother: the future presents to her a melancholy and irrevocable separation from all the comforts and endearments of society; a continued exposure to the invidious practices of malignity, without the support of enjoyment, or the consolation of hope. Thus situated, What disposition, however gentle, will not be corroded? What tenderness and sympathy of heart will not be supplanted by bitterness and misanthropy?

What benevolence of feeling will not be finally inspired with a malignant joy, by any occurrence which may reduce another to similar wretchedness and despair ?

Whoever has attentively observed the general habits, humour, and dispositions of the recluse, reflects with horror and pity on the despotism which the passions exercise over their minds ; and the cruel and unrelenting fury with which they scourge and goad the soul, which refuses to obey their mandates, and indulge their suggestions.

Love is ever strongest when the timid or scrupulous mind endeavours rather to escape than to resist or indulge it. To renounce the world is the task of children ; but to sacrifice love, is a labour almost too mighty for the courage and constancy of the hero. How many leave the jovial circle, or renounce the calmer delights of friendship, and all the pleasures of society, to find those joys in the arms of love, which the world could never afford ? or to forget in its calm and tender delights, the insolence of power, the treachery of faithless dependents and pretended friends, and the vengeful malice of open or concealed enemies ? Love, pure and sincere love, never decays : no change of place, nor lapse of time, erases the characters of bliss that have been once imprinted

in the heart by tenderness and passion. Solitude, with all its charms and all its virtues, affords no refuge from the sorrows attendant on unfortunate or unsuccessful passion; its friendly shades and coverts cannot shield the wounded heart from the pursuing grief which presses on it, and renders the whole of nature a barren blank, or a sepulchre hung with memorials of its losses and immortalisers of its anguish. Retirement cannot banish the remembrance of past enjoyments, nor still the impatient longings of the soul to regain those endearing hopes from which it has been cast by the rude shock of disappointment.

ARDENT and impassioned love is rarely vanquished in Solitude: the amorous shepherd fills the valley with sighs and complaints; and the cell of the monk reverberates his groans or curses. The beloved name ever dwells upon the lips, echoes among the rocks, is carved on the trees, or interrupts the pious ejaculation. The cloister of ST. GILDAS, in Brittany, stood on a lofty and solitary rock, the base of which was ever washed by the waves of a sea less turbulent than the heart of the unfortunate ABELARD, who, in that forlorn and savage spot, strove to lose the memory of his ELOISA in the exercises of religion and study: but his unpractised virtue could not keep the field against his yet recent love; and an unexpected letter,

letter, which he received from his mistress, delivered him up to all the former furies of his passion. ELOISA was weak ; but he declares his own fortitude still more wasted and overthrown, and his situation far more pitiable. ABELARD seems sooner to have felt the composing and strengthening influence of religion ; but he enfeebled the efficacy of its operation, by continually relapsing into the tenderness which once his felicity, had now become his torment. He answered the epistle of his fond ELOISA, not as her tutor or confessor, but as her passionate adorer ; as a man who had once loved, who still cherished sentiments which gave some ease to his heart, while they tormented it ; and who sought to console the sorrows of his mistress, by acknowledging equal struggles, and confessing the anguish with which his soul was rent by their separation.

To the soul, sick with a disastrous passion, Solitude, so far from affording relief, supplies a most malignant and fatal poison. The vulture of grief feeds at leisure on the heart, and desire plies its stings with redoubled violence. The walls of St. GILDAS never ceased to reverberate the groans of the unfortunate ABELARD ; as those of *Paraclete* had before echoed with the piercing plaints of his regret and wretchedness. Condemned to unrelenting misery, he represents his days as consumed  
in

in sighs and steeped in bitterness, and his nights as worn away in restless regrets and unprofitable wishes. "In deserts," says he, "whence amity and affection seem to have fled affrighted, and every social charity has turned indignant away, I persist to love what it is impossible for me to obtain, and sinful to desire. The passions, which acquire additional force in the gloomy Solitude that entombs me, riot with lawless fury in my soul; and Love, with Anguish and Despair in his train, usurps the heart which should be wholly consecrated to Religion."

Soft, gentle, and endearing, were the letters of ELOISA, but full of all the fire as well as all the tenderness of excessive and uncontrollable passion. "I panted," she writes, "to behold and sate my longing eyes with thy dear image: but since this must be denied, at least, let me be gratified and comforted by the sight of a few lines from thy hand. Can it be so great a task to write to one's beloved? ELOISA does not require from ABELARD, long epistles, filled with the stores of his science, and stamped with the signet of his genius; but brief, simple greetings, such as issue from the heart without the counsels of the understanding. How was I imposed on, ABELARD, when I buried myself in the joyless cloister, believing thee wholly mine, and there-

fore

“ fore bidding the world adieu, to live under thy  
“ laws, to thy service, and on thy love? It was  
“ thy desire, that I should continue an eternal  
“ widow to the world, and I yielded without re-  
“ luctance. But why should I conceal that I did  
“ so, not for the love of Heaven but of ABELARD?  
“ I am an inhabitant of the holy cloister: but  
“ unless thou livest for me, and to afford me  
“ counsel and comfort, this house is to me a  
“ melancholy dungeon. In consecrating myself  
“ to the offices of piety, what is my reward? This  
“ chaste vestment was given me by the sad ter-  
“ mination of our guilty loves, and not by the  
“ aspirations of sacred passion, or the too tardy  
“ visits of remorseful penitence. I combat with  
“ my unholy emotions without effect; I mortify  
“ them, but they harass and torture me; I still  
“ continue thy mistress; I still remain the slave  
“ of mortal desire; and while the chief of a  
“ convent of piously devoted souls, and the  
“ steward as well as handmaid of Heaven, I belong,  
“ unreservedly, to ABELARD.”

ABELARD's reply betrayed equal weakness of heart, with less blindness of reason. He implored her to assist him in extinguishing the remains of their fatal passion. “ Ah! couldst thou see thy  
“ lover,” he exclaims, “ once blooming with  
“ youth, health, gaiety, and favoured love, now  
“ pale,

" pale, meagre, and melancholy ; surrounded with  
 " a herd of stupid, gross, and brutal monks, who  
 " view him with scowls of jealousy and hatred,  
 " because they have been told he is a scholar ;  
 " and regard, with contempt and resentment, the  
 " emaciated figure which seems to cast reproach  
 " on their ungodly and bestial carulence !  
 " What would be thy thoughts of my human  
 " weakness, of my unmanly sighs, my unavailing  
 " and irrational tears, the hot distillations of de-  
 " feated passion, which pass on these credulous  
 " and undiscerning minds, as the dews of sincere  
 " penitence ? Alas ! I am bowed down under  
 " the oppression of inauspicious love ; not beneath  
 " the humility and repentance of a converted  
 " sinner. ELISA, commiserate my soul, and set  
 " it free from the passion with which thou hast  
 " entangled it ! I am a wretched and guilty man,  
 " who in moments of reason, when the rays of  
 " grace break upon the troubled darkness of his  
 " soul, lies prostrate before his Maker and his  
 " Judge, presses his lips to the earth, and mingles  
 " with the dust the sighs and tears of his con-  
 " trition and anguish. Couldst thou come and  
 " survey the lost state of thy wretched lover, thou  
 " wouldst cease to wish the continuance of his  
 " attachment. Come, if thou hast the heart, to  
 " interpose and bar him out from grace for ever !  
 " Come and take to thyself the sighs and groans  
 " that Heaven claims entire from him ! Come,  
 " be



“ be the ally and champion of the grand tempter,  
 “ and complete his unfinished conquest! What  
 “ canst thou not gain over a heart of which thou  
 “ hast so well known all the weakness? But no;  
 “ fly, save me from my own irresolution, and I  
 “ am rescued! Remove the perdition that im-  
 “ pends over me; and oh! I conjure thee, by  
 “ the tenderness we once cherished to our common  
 “ ruin, and the friendship we may still cultivate to  
 “ our mutual consolation and benefit, to prove to  
 “ me that I am still the beloved of thy heart, by  
 “ renouncing its homage, and suppressing every  
 “ sign and every emotion of thine own fond  
 “ affection.”

In the heart of ELOISA, the war of love, with  
 reason joined to religion, was far more violent;  
 outrageous, and wasteful. Not a line of her  
 answer, but evinced the inflammatory breath  
 with which the solitude and outward calm of the  
 cloister blew up the fire of concealed and ill-  
 restrained passion. “ In this temple of chastity,”  
 she writes, “ no fire blazes on the altar of my  
 “ heart, but that which preyed upon our virtue,  
 “ and has consumed the happiness and peace of  
 “ our lives. I feel that I am a sinner; but while  
 “ I view all the dangers of my guilty state, I  
 “ mourn not the perils of my soul, but the dis-  
 “ appointments of my passion; and the loss of  
 “ my lover. Far from repenting my former of-  
 “ fences,

“ fences, I wish to commit new; and as this is  
“ now impossible, I render myself as guilty as I  
“ can, by recalling, with delight, the image of  
“ our dear, but departed joys. I know what  
“ duties my veil imposes on me; but I feel too  
“ strongly the empire of accustomed love over a  
“ soft and ardent heart, to retain the power or the  
“ will to discharge them. I am seduced and over-  
“ borne by this gentle yet forceful impulse, and  
“ lose, in the turbulence of my senses and the con-  
“ fusion of my reason, the firmness of my heart  
“ and the rectitude of my will. One instant I  
“ attach myself with all the steadiness of my soul  
“ to the pious offices which on every side solicit  
“ my attention, and claim my heart; the next  
“ I am hurried away by my corrupt imagination,  
“ and give myself entire to the indulgence of  
“ every tender emotion and desire. Even now I  
“ am disclosing to thee what yesterday I resolutely  
“ vowed, in the devotion of my soul, to withhold.  
“ I had determined to banish thy image from my  
“ love and from my memory; I offered up new  
“ vows to respect those by which I am already  
“ bound to obey the laws my present state im-  
“ poses on me, to live only to Heaven in the tomb  
“ where I voluntarily entered; but the precincts  
“ and obligations of which I am not free to quit.  
“ But love has soon turned aside these inclinations;  
“ it has obscured my reason, and put to flight my  
“ just

"just and wholesome resolves. Oh! ABELARD!  
 "thou art so grappled to the cords of my heart, so  
 "entwined with the threads of my existence, that  
 "to sever myself from thee is impossible. In vain  
 "do I labour to burst the bands, which enthrall  
 "me to thee; my painful but fruitless efforts only  
 "fasten the fatal knots. For pity, for humanity,  
 "for tenderness, assist a wretched creature to van-  
 "quish her desires, to overcome herself and re-  
 "nounce, or at least to escape from, her attachment  
 "to thee! If thou art my spiritual father, from  
 "compassion succour thy anxious and despairing  
 "child; art thou my earthly lover, oh! console  
 "thy tender and despairing mistress for the sake of  
 "that love, which thou hast once felt, and from  
 "which even its impiety cannot estrange her."

SUCH impassioned lovers often conceive them-  
 selves pure from all voluptuous emotions, while the  
 fiercest desires torment them. "Had sensual joys  
 "alone been the inducement (continues ELOISA)  
 "of my love of thee, how easy had been my re-  
 "source, when the ruffian ministers of my barba-  
 "rous kinsmen had robbed me of ABELARD! Two  
 "and twenty years only of my life had worn away,  
 "when the lover, on whom my soul doated, was  
 "cruelly torn from my arms. At that age how  
 "many men did the world contain for the senses of  
 "ELOISA! could they have inspired her passion for  
 "thee.

" thee. But what was her resolve when deprived  
" of thee? She buried herself alive in the gloom of  
" a cloister, suppressed the emotions of sense, at a  
" time of life when all the pulses beat with the  
" fiercest ardor. To thee she consecrated the  
" flower of her charms: to thee she devotes the  
" remains of her faded beauty: her tedious days,  
" her widowed nights, worn away in sorrow and  
" divided between Heaven and thee."

ALAS! it appears that Heaven had a very small portion of ELOISA's love. The prey of her inextinguishable passion within the walls of PARADISE as well as in the cells of ARGENTEVIL, it was not till toward the close of her life, that after numberless combats she succeeded in repressing the transports of imagination, and confining the wild sallies of her eager desires. Her letters sufficiently prove her toilsome efforts to restrain and chasten her thoughts and wishes; and the earnestness, with which she endeavoured to reinforce her fainting virtue, by the counsels and exhortations of ABBE LARD, in whom sensual desire, dispossessed of its fortress, fought with less obstinacy and firmness. But she long continued the victim of voluptuousness, and the dupe of a lively and elegant, though luxurious fancy. She persuaded herself that her love must be pure and spiritual, because its object was rendered incapable of addressing itself to her senses:

ses: Yet she continually declares to him, the memory of their past joys is so dear to her, that day and night, and even during the awful solemnities of religion, it is the exclusive tenant of her fancy. She frankly confesses that she continually laments their loss, and owns, she has never abandoned the wish that it was possible they could be renewed. "Heavenly grace (thus she writes) has by one wound of the body, preserved thee from many in the soul: but in me, youth, sensibility, the experience of the sweet enjoyments past, combine to inflame the native ardor of my constitution:— These render the importunities of desire a continual torment, while the treacherous weakness of my sex's nature fighting on their side, has made my warfare more arduous, and my defeat more certain." The whole of ELOISA's expressions, veiled in the dignity of a language not defiled by vulgar use, do not appear to wound the appropriate delicacy of the sex; but they cannot perhaps appear with decency in a translation. I give therefore the original passage, as it is to be found in these extraordinary and alluring compositions. "*In tantum vero illæ, quas pariter exercuimus, amantium voluptates dulces mihi fuerunt, ut nec displicere mihi nec vix à memoria labi possint. Quocunque loco me vertam, semper se oculis meis cum suis ingerunt derisus. Nec etiam dormienti suis illusionibus parcunt. Inter ipsa Missarum solemnia, ubi purior esse debet*"

"oratio,

" oratio, obscæna earum voluptatum phantasmata ita  
 " sibi penitus miserrimam captivant animam, ut turpi-  
 " tudinibus illis magis quam orationi vacem. Quæ  
 " cum ingemiscere debeam de commissis, suspiro potius  
 " de amissis. Nec solum quæ egimus, sed loca pariter  
 " et tempora in quibus hæc egimus ita tecum nostro  
 " infixæ sunt animo, ut in ipsis omnia tecum agam, nec  
 " dormiens etiam ab his quiescam. Nonnunquam et ipso  
 " motu corporis animi mei cogitationes deprehenduntur  
 " nec à verbis temperant improvisis. O verè me mi-  
 " seram et illà conquestione ingemiscentis animæ dig-  
 " nissimam: infelix ego homo, quis me liberabit de cor-  
 " pore mortis hujus? Utinam et quod sequitur vera-  
 " citer addere queam: gratia Dei per Jesum Christum.  
 " Dominum nostrum. Hæc te gratia, charissime, præ-  
 " venit, et ab his te stimulis una corporis plaga me-  
 " dendo multas in animâ salvavit, et in quo tibi am-  
 " plius adversari Deus creditur, propitior invenitur.  
 " Hos autem in me stimulos carnis, hæc incentiva libi-  
 " dinis, ipse juvenilis ætatis fervor, et jucundissimarum  
 " experientia voluptatum; plurimum accendunt, et tantò  
 " amplius suâ me impugnatione opprimunt, quantò in-  
 " firmior est natura quam oppugnant."

IN all the fancied chastity of the tender and ar-  
 dent ELOISA, the movements of licentious passion  
 raged uncontrolled. She stained the purity of her  
 meditations with the most wanton deliriums; sur-  
 rendered her imagination, heated and irritated by

the acrid influence of her solitary confinement into the wildest disorder and effervescence, to the greedy indulgence of sensual suggestions: Thus deluding her reason with the shadowy pretence, that, not sinning in deed, her virtue was not impaired; and that, while her practice was pure, her soul was chaste, however impure were her inclinations her ideas or her wishes.

“ABELARD,” says she in one of her glowing epistles, “I must confess to thee what is my chief  
“solace and highest enjoyment. When I have  
“spent the whole day in recalling thy dear image,  
“in retracing thy charming features, in recollecting  
“thy words or endearing tenderness, and my  
“mind, fatigued and exhausted by its continual  
“agitation mechanically leans toward the renova-  
“tion of sleep, I willingly commit myself to its  
“lenient offices. Then ELOISA, who during the  
“day thinks on thy name with fear and trembling,  
“abandons her whole soul to the delicious sin of  
“gazing on the beauty of thy form, and listening  
“to the melodious tenderness of thy accents, till it  
“melts into softness and luxury. You too burn  
“anew for my caresses, forget the obstacles, the eter-  
“nal obstacles, the malice of our fate has opposed  
“to our happiness; and, while you vow that still  
“you drink ecstacy from my lips, I sink under the  
“grateful vehemence of thy passion. Our souls  
“dissolve

" dissolve in a mutual enjoyment, and pleasure  
 " penetrates our senses at every pore. But how  
 " brief the visit of this sweet illusion! How cruel  
 " the instant of its departure! I wake from thy  
 " arms and find myself widowed by the desertion  
 " of the kind vision: I stretch my hands after thy  
 " image, it eludes my embrace and leaves me  
 " disappointed, wretched and despairing. Am I  
 " deceived, ABBELARD? are our hearts really dis-  
 " voiced, or does not thy ELONA still fill thy  
 " fancy and inspire thy dreams?\*"

Such riotous sensuality of appetite, such wild  
 rage of desire, such frantic errors of sense, as equally  
 injure virtue and offend reason, could not have been  
 fostered by the simple emotions of nature and  
 passion; they arose from the rank hot-bed of mo-  
 nastic solitude. The instance of these famous lovers  
 affords a terrible proof of the power an extreme  
 secession from the occupations and diversions of

\* Perhaps, after the celebrated Epistle from ELONA to ABBELARD, where one of our best poets has painted all her struggles  
 and her transports, with a delicacy and tenderness which must  
 ever remain unrivalled; the copious extracts here made by Zim-  
 merman, might in the opinion of a few readers have been well  
 spared.—They have been retained however, for the purpose of ap-  
 plying the reasonings of our philosopher more forcibly, and with  
 the hope of, in some measure, counteracting that fascination, in  
 which the admirers of the poet forget the licentiousness, not to  
 say the impiety, of the wanton.



social life possesses of inflaming the passions, and corrupting the imagination: but those, who have developed the folds of the human heart, and explored the course and origin of its sensibility, know that, in all characters, the purest tenderness which the enamoured heart can feel, tends, when interrupted or controlled in its current to settle into the blackest melancholy; that, when to ardent esteem and affection a warm constitution and voluptuous imagination are joined, the consequence of confining the desires must be to exasperate and incense them, and that, the condition of an anchorite must necessarily tend more to corrupt the imagination and poison the sentiments, than all the temptations or opportunities of the most debauched metropolis.

PETRARCH, whose love was of a character infinitely more refined, elevated, and virtuous, than the luxurious fondness of ELOISA, felt that melancholy is no less the companion of ungratified, than of unfortunate, love; and long groaned under the anguish of its grievous visitation. In early life he sought peace and rest, from the agitation of his disastrous passion, on the verdant lap of his beloved VAUCLUSE, and hoped that there his buffeted heart would have found a smooth and secure haven. "But alas! I knew not what I was doing," he writes: "wide was my resource of its purpose, and long was I, before I found solitude any miti-

"gator

“gator of my sufferings. Every where my fierce  
 “and ravenous griefs pursued and preyed upon  
 “me. Alone, without support, without consola-  
 “tion or counsel, I had no defence against, no  
 “escape from, my sorrow; which was ever tor-  
 “menting with arrows new of agony my inmost  
 “heart. Continually corroded by the sadness of  
 “love, I filled the charming vale with my sighs and  
 “lamentations, the records of which all have seen;  
 “but in which most have admired the successful  
 “poet, without pitying the unhappy lover.”

LOVE, in PETRARCH, was a noble aspiration of the  
 heart to the tenderest offices of humanity, a pure  
 and delicate desire of its softest and finest enjoy-  
 ments, a gentle, but poignant and resolute melan-  
 choly of regret: in ELOISA and her paramour it  
 was a furious heat of wild desire, a stormy efferves-  
 cence of sensual appetite. That corporeal necessity  
 for the indulgence of the senses, on which the  
 young and debauched insist so strenuously, in order  
 to palliate their loose excesses, is but the instiga-  
 tion of an inflamed fancy. He, who would be the  
 master of his appetites, has only to curb the sallies  
 and wanderings of imagination. This is the great  
 incendiary of amorous desire, which but for its in-  
 centives, would let the blood keep on its even and  
 temperate course, even in the warmest constitution  
 and under the most torrid clime; though the lat-

ter has been unjustly stigmatized as the fomentor of luxurious passion. "But the feelings of flesh and blood, (exclaim the voluptuous and libertine,) are not to be reasoned away by the assertion of those, in whom the suggestions of nature have been at first choaked by early affectation and pedantry, and at last finally frozen by age." I have however too generally observed in those young men, who persisted in their opinion of the natural incitements to what they chose to call love, that, the dim and rayless eye, the pallid and hollow cheek, the trembling hand, the faded splendour and withered strength of their years, too palpably betrayed, that the bias they followed was by no means impressed by nature: She has implanted no propensities in the frame, which drag it to premature ruin and dissolution. To such I would say, "Blind your eyes never sought for or glibed on inflammatory objects, your fancies never fastened on sensual and lascivious images, those clamours of false passion had never been heard in you; and you had remained chaste, healthy and vigorous, without uncleanness, and without effort."

THE mischief of monastic institutions lies in this; that, they confine the conduct, without imposing any restraint upon the imagination, which only riots the more wildly for the violence imposed on the actions; Then delivered to a torrent of fierce desires,

desires, which vexed and troubled by injudicious and unnatural obstructions, rush into every irregularity and obliquity of suggestion and will, the mind attaches itself to every impure illusion; the chastity of the soul is corrupted, the unhappy victim of ill-devised superstition has only the option between turpitude and wretchedness; the Devil meanwhile is most unjustly accused as the author of the dire alternative. To effect the conquest of the passions, it is necessary to begin by subjugating the imagination, and he, who succeeds in quelling the insurrection of that power, or quieting its turbulence and commotion, accomplishes a labour more difficult and more glorious than the efforts of art, or the triumphs of heroism. The holy Jerome held at bay many passions, but lust was not to be dislodged from his breast: it pursued him to the frightful cavern, whither he had retired to serve God in solitary abstraction; and he experienced that he who enters into seclusion, with this demon in his bosom, will find him reinforced there by a legion of fiends.

JOHN, an anchorite of the deserts of Thebais, says very wisely, addressing his solitary brethren in general; "If there is any among you, who claims the haughty merit of having renounced the devil and the world, let him learn, that it is not enough to have done this with the lips: It does  
" not

" not suffice that he has resigned his worldly dig-  
 " nities and divided his possessions among the ne-  
 " cessitous, unless he has also abandoned his sins  
 " and quitted his shameful and wicked inclina-  
 " tions. Thus alone can we be said to renounce  
 " the works of Satan, and to guard our hearts  
 " from his dangerous practices. The demon never  
 " gains admission into our breasts, unless introdu-  
 " ced by some guilty passion, which we willingly  
 " entertain and allow to establish his dominion  
 " over us. Then are we never at peace; always  
 " troubled and distempered, now buoyed up with  
 " vain and hollow joys, now cast down by ground-  
 " less sorrow and dejection. And this must be the  
 " fate of all, who admit an evil spirit into their bo-  
 " soms, there to seat himself on the throne of their  
 " lusts and scatter at large in their hearts the poi-  
 " sonous seeds of vice and misery."

VIOLENT and illicit passions are the fiends that  
 beset and harass the mind in solitude, and its vic-  
 tory over the Devil is only the conquest of its own  
 vicious appetites. Love in its bright and rapturous  
 moments, is too rich in transport and bliss not to  
 fill the ardent and susceptible mind with a persua-  
 sion, that its joys afford the supremest bliss of which  
 life is capable; in such spirits reason can make no  
 head against the fascination. The hermit and  
 monk therefore must stifle in its birth every sug-  
 gestion

gestion of amorous passion ; which hostile to the happiness of all, who entertain its emotions, under circumstances that forbid their encouragement, is in a peculiar manner fatal to virtue, peace of conscience, and tranquillity of soul, in every monastic ; and must inevitably kindle all hell in his bosom. It is indeed the part of each man for himself, and of the legislature of every institution, whether civil or religious, to elicit and enliven by the endearments of sense the promptitude of the human mind to sympathy, affection and tenderness. But to this purpose the solitary fanatic, condemned to the sullen reserve of celibacy, cannot use either the sensations of the body or the dreams of imagination ; he cannot employ them to join the sentiment of admiration to the hope of personal interest, or by the taste of private enjoyment apply them to quicken and perpetuate the sense of merit and the impulse of friendship. The grosser parts alone can occupy his fancy, and these, instead of refining the appetites and expanding the affections, operate to deprave the desires, and corrupt the imagination. Debasing the mind to the cultivation of all the more sordid parts of its nature, they enslave it to the most contracted and abject selfishness. Accordingly the holy fathers of the desert, though they might burn with the impurest rage of appetite, knew not the varied emotions of love : but, ignorant of its benefits, as of its chaste and dignified pleasures,

pleasures, wallowed in images of brutal indulgence; unjustly arraigning the tempter, as the author of ideas begotten by solitude upon the lewdness of their own hearts. Of all this Satan was certainly innocent, and none of the mischief had probably occurred, had they who fancied themselves his victims, dissipated their luxurious cogitations by the affairs and pastimes of the world, or broken the violence of their passions by laborious exercise of the body; or had they been able by means of books, to vary the tedious uniformity of solitude, and substitute the excursions of mental curiosity and moral reflection for the perpetual rumination of animal desire. Without these aids the self-denials, the penances, the austere and dreadful discipline of Monasticks and Ascetics were ineffectual; the very chastity, in which they persisted to retain their persons, rendered their minds obscene and their wills guilty; and celibacy instead of assisting, according to their favourite persuasion, in clearing the soul from earthly impurity, and approximating it to divine brightness and elevation, chained it down to the basest appetites and the most libidinous suggestions.

It was the doctrine of the Egyptian monastics, that there are six degrees and stages of chastity; proceeding in the following order. That the votary of solitude should not be disturbed and agitated by

the instigations of the flesh. That his fancy should not loiter and dwell upon voluptuous images. That the sight of woman should not excite in him the faintest sensation. That the organs of desire should never exhibit the movements, that denote the secret solicitations of sensuality. That without these shameful acknowledgements of sinful proneness he should be able to ponder on the wondrous process of human generation; and lastly, that during the heedless licence of sleep, his fancy should not stray into wanton and impure visions. It was the maxim of those who gave, and those who received this principle, that no one could be certain he had ascended this scale of perfection, unless he had past the trials required in the several degrees, and satisfied himself, by actual experiment, that the measure of his chastity was complete. However pious this scrupulousness of conscientiousness might be thought by some, it will scarcely be thought prudent by many.—No one surely who has observed the thin partitions which separate human virtues from their perhaps very opposite vices, can conceive that frequent meditation on forbidden pleasures, was the most judicious method of eradicating impure desires from the mind. The danger of this discipline was experienced in the most melancholy manner by the Egyptian anchorites; whose devout zeal, we are to presume, exciting them to frequent essays of their advances in chastity,



tity, so accustomed their fancies to brood over salacious reveries, that they finally encompassed their souls with a net of impure and sinful associations, from which they were often really incapable of releasing themselves; and then, enthralled by the vice they had presumptuously approached, they attributed to the malicious arts of the Devil what was the mere result of their own rash familiarity with sinful images.

WHEN the imagination is vitiated, and the inclinations rendered corrupt and perverse, Solitude only serves the more strongly to attach the mind to its unfortunate depravity. It is there besieged and persecuted by lascivious phantoms, that break upon its studies, overpower its efforts, to maintain the purity of its conceptions, and give it up to the fury of wild and licentious passions. I was once informed by a personage of very singular virtue and merits, but the calm of whose senses had been disquieted, and the simplicity of his heart debauched by circumstances peculiarly unfortunate, during the inadvertent innocence of childhood, that he had been driven to seek refuge in rural retirement, from the incentives with which his diseased fancy distressed him in the city, as often as he was alone, and even when he endeavoured to escape them in the sacred offices of devotion. But in the expected asylum he found himself so much more

open to the inroads of his soul's enemy, that even the fight of the most homely and ungracious wench, excited the fiercest tumult in his senses; and after having sustained through six days the new and more violent combats to which he had thus exposed himself, he was compelled to return to the town.

THERE he succeeded for some time in repressing the animal symptoms which were continually stirred in him by his unruly imagination; but nothing could dislodge from the latter the voluptuous ideas that persisted to fill it with riot and disorder, whenever his attention was not engaged by company, and his faculties engrossed by conversation. It is incredible to what a degree this unconquerable passion had subdued him: if he attempted to read, every character appeared transformed into some female semblance: if he strove to entertain himself with his own thoughts, his thoughts were always of female shapes and amorous actions. He found his best friend in his pen; though too frequently even that availed him nothing; for his distracted mind and injured health disqualified him for strong and constant exertions of intellect, and constrained him to abandon public offices of high importance, by attention to which he had essayed to recall his faculties from their wretched fascination. An ecclesiastic of high dig-  
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nity in the hierarchy, of which he was a member, forbade him to marry; and his refined notions of morals and propriety, restrained him from every clandestine indulgence of the appetite that tyrannised over and devoured him: but though always master of his actions, his rebellious imagination held out against all his efforts to reduce it to reason and chastity. His unblemished life was his only hope and consolation; his depraved imagination his continual torment. Dejected in spirit, and depressed in the presence of his brethren, by his severe sense of this involuntary weakness, he was ever eager to recede into Solitude; and as often as he retreated from shame into seclusion, he was assailed by new attacks of seductive images, and harassed by the return of his incessant combats.\*

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\* Whoever has studied the growth of the human heart, and marked the minute origin of its virtues and vices, will hear with affright the source of this malady, but will cease to wonder at its progress. The unfortunate, but excellent person, whose infirmity rather than depravity, I now publish with his own permission, had, in the fourth year of his age, received such lessons from a female domestic, that the propensity to sensual pleasure was rendered the reigning passion of the mind, at a period when other children are ignorant of any difference between the sexes. An understanding which arrived at a strength almost equally premature, soon taught him the nature and consequences of the snare into which he had been conducted, and he fled the girl whose  
baneful

THIS extravagant passion was not grounded on any reality or conception of corporeal craving, but was merely the effect of an unnatural incitement of the imagination, acting on enfeebled and irritated nerves. Its power was dreadful, when the attention of the unfortunate gentleman was not occupied or attracted, by objects that acted on him more forcibly than the dreams of his inflamed fancy. By degrees his nerves, agitated by an immoderate sensibility, grew more and more irritable; and his health and strength at last sunk entirely beneath the agitations of his sense, and the struggles of his oppressed but reluctant spirit.

THIS was the Unclean Spirit that beset the Eastern anchorites, and from whose snares they, like this excellent priest, had the will but not the power to deliver themselves. Not like him, relieved by the frequent interruptions of company and diversity of scene and employment, their imagination usurped an undivided and unlimited tyranny over their souls, and all the faculties prostrated themselves before its luxurious deliriums.

baneful instructions had poisoned his imagination, and impaired his health; but he could not escape the thoughts and wishes she had implanted in his youthful heart, and kneaded into the substance of his tender mind. The passion for the sex possessed his soul to an extreme, happily rare; corrupting the imagination that fed its impurity, and exhausting the powers of his faculties, while it roused and exercised them.

It is evident from the relation of St. ATHANASIUS, that the holy ANTONY had not the six degrees requisite to a perfect chastity.\* In his youth five at least were wanting to him. The unclean spirit (*spiritus fornicationis*) allowed him no repose or freedom by night, and vexed him so cruelly during the day, that his desperate combats with the fiend were visible to every spectator. His first temptation of the Saint was by filling his fancy with unchaste ideas: these the holy man escaped in the cares and duties of religion. The demon then applied himself to provoke the stings of the flesh: heavenly meditation and extreme abstinence overcame them. Satan next appeared to him by night in the shape of a beautiful woman, and practised on him with every inflammatory blandishment. ANTONY cast the treacherous beauty from him, with firmness and indignation. When the old serpent found this powerful engine fail him, he could not contain the fury of his disappointment; and casting off the disguises of his artifices, appeared to the fiend in all his native ugliness, and proclaiming himself the Demon of incontinence, declared his resolution to assail ANTONY with seduction and importunity, till he

\* Athanasius says, "Diabolus tentatis omnibus ut Antonium  
 " a vita eremitica abduceret, sed incassum, tunc suis in umbilico  
 " ventris fretus armis, iisque exultans, in juvenem impetum  
 " fecit."

had yielded to the perpetration of unchastity. The hermit grew alarmed and troubled, but redoubled his precautions, chastised his body with sharper sufferings, and tamed his flesh into a more absolute obedience of his will. He charged his diet with new severities, ate only once in three or four days, and frequently denying his eyes the refreshment of slumber, endeavoured to stupify his senses to the instigations of appetite. This so chagrined the Fiend, that, leading a whole legion of his comrades to assault the Saint with every variety of temptation, he finally succeeded in suspending his senses, though he could not overcome his resolution.

HILARION, the famous disciple and successor of ANTONY, secluding himself in a horrid wilderness, chose for his habitation a cell of dimensions so confined, as not to allow its tenant the ease of an erect posture. Here, destitute of every employment and amusement, and consumed with the tedium of existence, the pious hermit appears to have sought comfort and entertainment in the indulgence of voluptuous reveries. JEROME, with the usual art of the fathers of the church, who make Satan responsible for all their backslidings, says, that "Here the Devil irritated the senses of HILARION, and blew up the coals of habitual

“desire in his ripening body;” \* words, that to all who have watched the movements of the passions, sufficiently express the merely human nature of HILARION’s tempter, and warrant the whole of my interpretation. HILARION, however, resolved to detach himself from the unholy habit; was incensed against himself with pious indignation; and by redoubling severities on his emaciated body, applied himself to the purification of his mind. He well knew where the Devil had stationed himself, and strove to dislodge him, by heaping castigations on the offending part. “Thou little ass,” † cried he in a strain of metaphor, that for a saint scarcely appears sufficiently serious, “I will so treat thee, that thou shalt be glad to abandon thy vicious tricks: I will feed thee not with grain, but with chaff; I will tame thy stubborn spirit with hunger and thirst; I will oppress thee with heavy burthens; I will weary thee with labour, and with heat, and with cold, that thy wantonness may be superseded by the want of rest, and the craving for fodder; so do I trust to cure thee of thy kickings.” HILARION’s conduct relaxed not from his promise; and the expedient availed him. He accustomed himself

\* Ibi titillabat Diabolus sensus ejus et pubescenti corpori solitis voluptatum incendia suggerebat.

† See STERNE’S *Tristram Shandy*.

to obstinately-protracted fasts, wherein he rarely relieved his faintness by the refreshment of a few herbs or figs. In the long intervals between these spare and infrequent repasts, he sang and prayed, dug the earth, that he might sharpen the cravings of appetite by the pains of fatigue, consumed his strength in various labours, and at length conquered the fiercest of his passions by ruining his health and almost destroying his frame.

PACHOMIUS, a Scythian Anchorite, suffered, in his seventieth year, the fiercest desires of the flesh.\* HERACLIDES relates, after his own confession, that this ungodly dereliction of purity had bewildered the hermit's senses from his fiftieth to his sixty-second year, scarcely allowing him, during that long period, the respite of a moment's calm.

He thought that he had overcome the Devil long before; for at the commencement of his godly course, the Tempter, under the disguise of a Moorish maiden, had seated himself on the young Saint's knee. PACHOMIUS then immersed himself more profoundly in the waste; and there, to place an eternal bar between himself and the objects of his terror, finding a serpent, had applied it to the

\* "Anno ætatis septuagesimo etiamnum grandi cupiditate actus venereal vexabatur:" says Heracles.



member whose transgressions endangered his salvation, and provoked it to infix its teeth in the sinful part, by almost pinching its head from the body.

THE hermit, AMMONIUS, was so stung and tormented by the continual importunities and assaults of intemperate thoughts, that he was fain to free his imagination from them, by cauterising his flesh with a hot iron; and he rendered his body one entire sore, before he could succeed in chasing from his mind all its obnoxious inclinations.

EVAGRIUS, a famous vanquisher of the flesh and contemner of the world, stood in the depth of winter, naked in a fountain, till his senses were benumbed, and his limbs stiffened, that he might force the Unclean Spirit to raise the siege of his virtue. Yet at the close of his life, which was protracted to a great age, he confessed that he had scarcely then, after so long a pilgrimage, been three years free from the contamination of impure desire.

MOSES, an Egyptian Hermit, was once, as HERACLIDES informs us, so goaded by the demon to the renewal of his ancient practices,\* that he

\* *Ad consuetudinem impuritatis antiquæ.*

found no means of taming his unruly senses; but by denying himself sleep, and even abstaining constantly from a recumbent posture. Six years, if we may trust HERACLIDES, he passed every night on his feet, and with unclosed eyes, addressing Heaven; yet did not the indefatigable fiend remit his sollicitations, nor desist from his seductions.\*

RUFFINUS relates the history of an anchoret of Thebais, whom he does not name, to whom the demon appeared in the figure of a fair, lively, and insinuating woman. The conversation between the hermit and the nymph grew warm and kind, and intermingled with jests and dalliance. In short the wile succeeded, and the fancied victor of his desires was despoiled of all his laurels; he became agitated, eager, impatient, and outrageous, and unreservedly delivered himself up captive to his unchaste desires. But when he sought the embrace of the bewitching female, she melted from his arms with a horrible yell. The defeated Saint, now convinced of the inefficacy of his devout exercises and solitary mortifications, returned in despair to the world, and plunged into every indecency and immorality.†

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\* Et tamen ne sic quidem illo quo laborabat malo potuit liberari.

† It will scarcely be credited, perhaps, that the narrators  
of

SOME Anchorets, who were regarded by the Egyptians as having attained a character of perfect sanctity, in order to gain a truce in this contest between the flesh and the spirit, occasionally deserted their cells to quench the heat of their imaginations, by indulging in actual sensuality. "But the glory of a Saint consists," says CASSIANUS, "in sinking into sin, and re-ascending to virtue;" and these back-sliding brothers, on their return to the cell, continued to be esteemed worthy models of Christian piety; nor was any laic esteemed worthy to perform for them the most menial offices. Sometimes too these tenants of the wild were visited in their retirements by holy sisters, who

of these strange histories use such a bare-faced freedom of expression, and such unequivocal indecency of detail, as prevent us from translating many of their expressions; but the following extract from the text of Ruffinus, may serve as a specimen of the greater fulness of their pictures, and the superior boldness of their language. "*Diabolus sub specie formosæ mulieris monachum in eremo Thebaidis tentavit. Sensim sensimque, inter blandiora colloquia, risus jocusque miscetur; Diabolus manum procax ad mentum barbamque Venerandi protendit. Quid multa? Ad ultimam captivum ducit militem Christi. Continuo enim perturbari intra se ipsum et libidinis æstus fluctuare cepit; atque ubi obscœnos jam conabatur inire amplexus, ille ululatum teterrimum diræ vocis emittens, umbra ut erat inanis, per manus amplectentis elabitur; ipsum quoque dedecorosis motibus inanes auras sectantem foedissimâ cum derisione deseruit. At ille desperans sæculum repetit, omnique se tradidit impudiciæ et iniquitati.*"

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fought spiritual conference with them. The result of their communion was, in general, such as might be naturally expected.

RUFFINUS, to whom I am indebted for most of these anecdotes, details, it is true, in the second part of his *Lives of the Holy Fathers of the Deserts*, a crowd of instances, in which all impure desires were firmly repressed and finally extinguished. But even in these glorious examples, we trace a recurrence of thoughts and facts by no means consistent with that chastity of mind in which real virtue consists.

THE great JEROME, with the nervous and impassioned eloquence that peculiarly characterises his writings, describes, in the following language, the fierce struggles of sense and religion, by which his soul was, as it were, rent in twain, and his journey through life harassed with an incessant persecution. "When," says he, "I sought to  
" screen myself from the heat of youth in the  
" savage Solitude of the dreary desert, I sunk  
" beneath the assaults of sin, and fled before the  
" fiery spur of carnal emotion. I sought to save  
" myself from these severe trials, by frequent and  
" long abstinence ; but I emaciated my body  
" without enfeebling my desires ; and my soul  
" was

“ was abandoned to all the shameful cravings of  
“ the hottest sensuality, and the indulgence of  
“ the most voluptuous images. How often did  
“ I persuade myself, entombed as I was in a  
“ howling wilderness, surrounded by toils and  
“ pains and sufferings, that I was living among  
“ the joys of Rome, and revelled in all its guilty  
“ luxuries? So much was my imagination en-  
“ slaved to its criminal passions! My neglected  
“ and punished limbs were covered with sack-  
“ cloth, and displayed a more than Ethiopian  
“ swarthiness, from the dust of the earth that  
“ almost grew to them. I groaned and wept day  
“ and night; and when sleep, against my will,  
“ overpowered me, my shattered joints scarcely  
“ held together, as I suddenly fell to the ground  
“ utterly exhausted. I do not speak of my food;  
“ bread and water were a luxury, compared with  
“ the unfavourable sparseness of my repasts. And yet,  
“ stung by hunger, scorched by thirst, consumed  
“ and perished by fatigue and pain, I continually  
“ dreamt, that I, the companion of savage beasts  
“ and venomous reptiles, dwelt with beauteous  
“ and gentle virgins. My face was pale, my  
“ squalid features rugged and withered, my sunken  
“ eyes ceased to return the kind ray of Heaven;  
“ yet the rankness of sensual appetite fermented  
“ in my heart, and the unholy fire of lewd con-  
“ cupiscence

"cupiscence burnt unabated in my almost exanimate body." \*

WITH such dreadful inflammation of the passions, such fatal corruption of the fancy, did that life of religious Solitude affect its votaries, which has been in former ages so zealously recommended for its admirable virtues in purifying the soul, and exalting its affections. Tears of compassion for the melancholy delusion to which these wretched enthusiasts sacrificed their social usefulness and pleasure, and converted their natural powers and advantages into enemies and curses to themselves, will mingle with the applause that must be extorted by their Spartan endurance of the most cruel sufferings; their heroic conquest of their passions; and their noble, though wild aspirations above nature; frequently sustained with incredible constancy, and a dignity, unnatural and monstrous indeed, but capable of taking away the shame of folly, and rendering even insanity glorious.

IN the earliest ages of the Church, Solitude and holy quiet were recommended to every Christian

\* The reader may perhaps be curious to hear how Jerome finally tamed the fury of his turbulent lusts; and surely the expedient will surprise him. He succeeded in extinguishing them altogether merely by the study of Hebrew.

ecclesiastic :

ecclesiastic : but its members frequently employed their calm and leisure hours very profanely ; and there were few that did not share their Solitude with agreeable damsels. Even in the third century, the fathers, ORIGEN, CYPRIAN, and EUSEBIUS, are loud and severe in their denunciations against the debauchery which then prevailed among the clergy. Yet at this very time every bishop, elder, and minister of the church, whatever his degree, together with the whole tribe of monks and anchorites, were represented in their own annals as the heirs of Heaven, and almost its representatives. Credulous zealots alone will be contented with such superficial and fallacious views of men and things, or confide in the general efficacy of institutions, built on the subversion of all our natural powers, and held together by the exertion of a constant violence on the emotions of the heart.

THE palaces of the African bishops were ever open to those virgins who aspired to the glorious title of Ascetic, and had vowed to seek the skies in the un sullied garment of maiden purity. But oaths like theirs could not congeal the warmth and tenderness of the female bosom ; and these pious damsels, who had renounced their appropriate condition of marriage, to preserve a more especial purity of sentiments and manners, sought to reimburse themselves for what they had sacrificed,

by

by becoming the companions and concubines of such prelates as the world regarded with the highest veneration.\* To disdain the nuptial state was deemed equally honourable to both sexes; and many members of the hierarchy, in high station, invested themselves with the same of peculiar sanctity, by refusing to assume the duties and obligations of marriage. But in order sometimes to relax the rigour of their righteousness, and mitigate the austere piety of the virgins, whom devotion had detached from the joys of earth, they did not scruple, in brotherly regard and affection, to pass their nights with the young and fair Ascetics.†

\* Paul, Bishop of Samosata, a Saint of great reputation, had a crowd of the finest women constantly about his person, who accompanied him in all his journeys and missions.

† This indulgence of the primitive Church must have been peculiarly adapted to the constitution of the Catholic hierarchy; (by general character somewhat tenacious of the forms under which it flourishes and enjoys itself;) since the practice has never been abolished among the Romish Clergy. Among the Greek Christians of the third century, these holy maidens were called *συνισκίται*, among the Latins, *Subintroductæ*. The name, indeed, in the lapse of so many ages, is the only part that has undergone any material alteration: at present the *Subintroductæ* of the Canons bear the title of *housekeepers*; while those of the secular clergy are known by the humbler denominations of *cook-maids*.



THIS usage began somewhat earlier than the third century; and complaints of its prevalence are found in various contemporary writers; though it is not very earnestly censured by any of the fathers, except the stern CYPRIAN. This practice had, doubtless, its boundaries; and what must have narrowed them extremely, was, that most of the episcopal and inferior clergy were contented to wear the chains of regular matrimony; while those alone, who sought the fame of less vulgar sanctity, fled the pale of marriage, and received female Ascetics into their beds. This was not deemed of the low nature of a common hymeneal contract, since such connection was not understood to extend beyond an union of souls; though some incredulous minds have not been wanting to assert, that under the torrid skies of Africa, the lamp of religion too frequently served but to kindle the torch of earthly love. These spiritual conjunctions, however, were greatly encouraged by the theologians of the time, moved; it may be supposed, by the observation, how rarely the harmony of souls was consulted or maintained in ordinary marriages.

THE pious and eloquent CHRYSOSTOM declares; that "The state of celibacy must subsist in a perpetual warfare; and that the faculties and resolution must be always under arms, to prevent  
" being

“being overpowered or surprised by the incursions  
 “of dishonest and sinful lusts. The watchfulness  
 “of virgins to preserve their souls inviolate and  
 “undefiled, should be unremitting; for the Demon  
 “is ever at hand, if they neglect their circumspec-  
 “tion but for an instant, to cast the brand of un-  
 “lawful desire into the sanctuary of heaven.”  
 Marriage therefore, the Saint regarded as a neces-  
 sary composition between the purity of the soul,  
 and the natural inclinations of the body.

SOME of the fathers of the Church were accus-  
 tomed to describe the state of female celibacy, as the  
 art of living a chaste and godly life amid the impure  
 contagion of the world; and in the abject gross-  
 ness of mortality to regain the resemblance of the  
 soul's celestial origin. Marriage they represented  
 on the other hand, as a temporising with Heaven  
 and Hell, as a dam against the outrageous torrent  
 of sensual appetite, or rather as a vent and passage  
 for the uncleanness of the soul; and they went so  
 far as to consider the institution as despicable, if not  
 hateful. “Formerly,” says CHRYSOSTOM, a dou-  
 “ble purpose was enveloped in the mystery of mar-  
 “riage, the obtaining of children and the suppres-  
 “sion or rather limitation of the rankness of hu-  
 “man desire. But since population has sufficiently  
 “covered the earth, the former duty no longer is  
 “incumbent on man, and if he assume the hyme-  
 “neal

“neal yoke, it can only be a capitulation with the  
“vehemence of inclinations which it is a duty to  
“conquer.”

VIRGINITY, it appears from the whole strain of their exhortations and reasonings, was regarded by the fathers of the Church as a great and heavy charge; while marriage was considered only as a shelter from the temptation to a promiscuous intercourse between the sexes. So impressive are the descriptions given by CYPRIAN, AMBROSIUS, and the fiery African TERTULLIAN, of the difficulties that attend the condition of female celibacy, or as they express themselves, aggravate the painful burthen of virginity, that the imagination faints under the contemplation of the pangs their purity must have cost the first Oriental nuns. The melancholy that must have oppressed them, confined within a dull and narrow enclosure, and restricted to the continually recurring discharge of the same tedious duties, joined to the recollection that they were condemned to entertain desires of which they must never know the gratification, could not but render their situation a constant succession of struggles, equally afflicting and arduous; and the regulation of the holy PAULA though severe, will not appear superfluous, which forbade the sisters of her convent all intercourse whatever with persons of the other sex.

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THIS rigorous precaution was not universal among the female monasteries: but in all, great severity prevailed in the laws, however relaxed and unrestrained the manners might be. Privation of the object however differs widely from suppression of the passion; the imagination helps the mind to a recompense for the loss sustained by the senses; and, in their hearts, perhaps nuns are more guilty than the most abandoned of women. The dwellings of the female monastics in the Egyptian wastes, were sufficiently contiguous to the habitations of the monks to admit the interchange of mutual services: the male Cenobites built the cells of the nuns, and performed those offices of labour or address, to which their sex or habits had not adapted the pious sisters: who in their turn made the garments of the monks, and supplied them with many of the conveniencies it is usually the province of the Fair to furnish. This intercourse, though slight, useful, and almost necessary, was allowed with difficulty and suspicion; and the strictest care was used to prevent its degenerating into a more exceptionable commerce. From these precautions being equally general and severe, we must conclude, that a multitude of events had evinced their necessity, and may presume what were the passions that rendered them indispensable.

ANOTHER evidence of the havoc made by the

lusts of the flesh, in the purity of the Egyptian cloisters, is afforded by the frequent monitions and vehement invectives against them, in all the works of the Fathers. It is indeed manifest from the whole strain of their warnings and reproofs, that clandestine meetings between the professors of chastity of both sexes were not unusual; and that the purpose or result of them was commonly such, as all who are acquainted with human nature would rationally expect. CASSIANUS, in the commencement of the fifth century, speaks of these occurrences with a simplicity and unconcern, that sufficiently intimate their frequency. "Those disgraceful offences," he says, "which in our Western cloisters are so mildly noticed and almost overlooked; such as revilings, contentions, and unchaste familiarity with the other sex, are punished among the Egyptian monks with bodily pain, and even expulsion." This expressive passage instructs us, that in both regions of the christian societies, the Monks indulged those interdicted desires; and a multitude of circumstances concur to prove, that removed from the intercourse of the world, the debaucheries of the Egyptian Monasteries, must have been confined among themselves.

It is remarkable, that when the emperor JOVIAN established a law, which condemned to death every holy brother, who was convicted of soliciting a nun

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to conjugal or illicit love, its operation was found too severe, and the statute was speedily mitigated. In the West too, though not so early, the frequent amours of the nuns rendered it necessary to secure their chastity by severe penal restrictions; and to strengthen the weakness of their resolution, and confine the looseness of their manners, by the stubborn and faithful guard of material confinement. Even these precautions did not long suffice; and in the wide corruption of morals, which overwhelmed all real piety in the middle ages, the nunneries were early distinguished for their superior licentiousness; these pretended sanctuaries of purity and innocence, became the notorious habitations of lawless riot, and the open temples of shameless sensuality.

A MODERN German writer, has recently brought to light, on the authority of the most unexceptionable documents, the canonical interrogations which in the eighth century, were, previous to inauguration, proposed to every bishop. From these we obtain the mortifying conviction, that there is no unclean practice, however flagitious and unnatural, to which the Catholic Clergy were not at that period addicted; compared with the shameful and monstrous abominations, then too frequent, incontinence with the holy sisters might have been deemed a pontifical virtue.

IN fact the monastic and secular clergy, no less than the laity of the ninth and tenth century, retained so little sense of decency, chastity, delicacy or decorum, that we cannot venture to soil our page with the recital of the ceremony observed by the Grand Master of the Templars in the form of initiation. Every class of the priesthood was immersed in grossness and profligacy : adultery inspired them with no awe, incest excited no abhorrence ; and the monks almost asserted the indulgence of unnatural passions, as the peculiar prerogative of their condition. Most of the cloisters had withdrawn themselves from the jurisdiction of their respective bishops, and thrown themselves under the protection of the Pope ; to whom they paid a yearly tribute for the licence of perpetrating all the most indecent, and scandalous excesses. Although much of this loathsome profligacy was derived from the inundation of depravity, which rolled its black and putrid tide over the whole age ; it cannot be doubted, that the more profound proneness of brutality, into which the convents were plunged, was the effect of an ill-regulated solitude ; and a leisure, which the ignorant and lazy monks knew not how to employ, in decent and honourable pleasures.

INCENTIVES to unchastity, doubtless will be found in sufficient abundance, in the nature of man ; and  
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the constitution of society is but too well adapted to augment and provoke their operation. Cloisters however lead a new fury to the incitements of sense, which though like air, capable of a certain degree of compression, recoils with mischievous violence when too much restrained. It is probable, that nuns in general, suffer less from the suppression of sensual impulses than is usually represented; many seem too dull and insensible to conceive any lively desires; many are so educated as to become the creatures of fear, and lose the capacity of entertaining hope, or indulging inclination; and others, doubtless, though endowed with a quick imagination, and the softest sensibility, are rapt with high enthusiasm, and have all their wishes exalted into noble aspirations; which elevate them far above the low incitements of sense, and render the preservation of a romantic purity, the source of real and inexhaustible happiness to them. But when by any sudden shock the stimulatives to sensual pleasure have been awakened, then is their action far more violent in the confinement of monastic institutions, than in the moderate restraint of the world; and more difficult to be restrained within the bounds of prudence, moderation, and decency.

THE nuns of *Argenteuil*, who first chose ELOISA for their abbess, probably not without a provident reference to her former frailty, and regard to the



advantages their own pleasures might hope from it, soon fell, under her superintendence, into the most dissolute laxity of manners. SUGGER, Abbot of *Saint Dennis*, assigned the notorious irregularities, and scandalous disorders of their life, as a justification of his desire to possess himself of their monastery; and at his instigation, Pope HONORIUS expelled ELOISA, with all her sisters, from their religious house, which was conferred upon SUGGER, and the brothers of his order. ELOISA addressed herself, after this disgrace, to her lover, to procure her another asylum; where she might estrange herself from all her earthly weaknesses and passions. ABELARD, with the permission of the Bishop of *Troyes*, resigned to her his house and chapel of *Paraclete*, with the lands attached to it; where she settled herself with a few sisters, and became herself the foundress of a convent. Of this monastery ELOISA continued the Superior till her death; and she sustained her charge with so much discretion and piety, that her youthful error ceased to be remembered; her sanctity and learning acquired her general admiration and reverence; and her cloister was in a short time enriched with many noble donations. She was regarded by the Bishop of the district as a daughter, was loved as a sister by the neighbouring Priors and Abbots, and was venerated by the laity as a mother! The maintenance of purity and decorum was her chief and continual

continual care; every night she made the circuit of the convent, and drove to their cells those of her flock, whom, under the pretence of enjoying the cool of evening, she found loitering in the courts or gardens; for she “remembered too well the purpose and consequence of the twilight walks of her sisters at Argenteuil, to indulge them to her spiritual daughters at Paraclete:” This is her own observation in one of her letters to ABELARD.

ELOISA, however, had felt the weakness and waywardness of the female heart sufficiently to be aware that her cares of this kind, were a frail and imperfect security against the perils her nuns had to apprehend from Solitude. “Though our holy renunciation of the world, our vows, and our manner of life,” she says, “seem to secure us from all temptations; though our walls and grates forbid almost every approach; yet is it the outside only, the bark of the tree that is covered from injury, while the sap of original corruption imperceptibly spreads within, and may prove fatal to our young plantation, notwithstanding all thy precautions, and my vigilance to preserve it. Virtue in us is grafted upon nature and woman; the one weak, and the other of all things most changeable. I myself maintain my virtue with effort; the

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“greater

“ greater as my besieger finds me but too much  
 “ inclined to favour his purposes; and how is it  
 “ possible, that loving my danger, I should succeed  
 “ to repel it? or overcome an enemy whom I  
 “ engage with divided and treacherous forces?”

It might be considered unjust to urge the evidence of Boccace respecting the licentiousness and immorality of monasteries; yet it has been asserted, even by members of the Catholic church, that the sole cause of that enmity and rancour, manifested against this satirical writer by the monks, his contemporaries, was their consciousness, that the descriptions his witty tales offer of their indecent and dissolute manners, in no degree exceeded the reality: “ Whoever,” observes one of these ingenuous ecclesiastics, “ lashes the vices  
 “ of the Catholic clergy, has always been decried  
 “ by them as a contemner of religion and piety;  
 “ whoever drags their ignorance or depravity to  
 “ the light insults God, and tramples upon the  
 “ sanctity of his word and ordinances.” The famous pestilence, that marked with wide-wasting havock the middle of the fifteenth century, had been the occasion of releasing the various monastic fraternities from the ordinary restraints of the cloister; the monks and nuns, mingled at large with the laity, abandoned themselves to every irregularity of excess, and exhibited no sign of  
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that purity, which, more than the cowl or veil, should be the badge of the monastic condition: Nor when the cessation of the plague constrained them to return to their convents, did they return to their religious restraints. Contemporary historians have delivered the most disgusting accounts of their intemperance and debauchery; and this pestilence is uniformly stigmatised even by the ecclesiastical writers, as an epoch infamous for the corruption it infused into the morals of the Catholic priesthood and clergy, whom it infected with an epidemic distemper of depravity and vice, that has not yet ceased to rage among them, and to taint their minds and morals.\*

\* It is probable that similar observations may have been suggested by the effects of the recent earthquake in Sicily and Calabria; though I own none such have yet reached me. Sir William Hamilton, however, the celebrated investigator of nature in her volcanic processes, in his account of this concussion of the earth, transmitted to the Royal Society of London, makes the following remark, which, partially, at least, confirms my supposition. "I should mention that the nuns of Messina, who, since the destruction of their convents, have dwelt in temporary buildings, under the inspection of their several confessors, were continually roving about the town and adjacent country; and by the increased cheerfulness of their looks, appeared to enjoy the freedom procured them by this shocking calamity. I had previously remarked the same feature in the school-boys at Reggio; and noting these facts hastily in my tablets, I had made my observation in the following whimsical terms:—*Earthquakes particularly agreeable to nuns and school-boys.*"

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WHAT these historians concur in ascribing to the incidental effects of the plague, I cannot help imputing to the malignant operation of Solitude, and discovering in that alone the radical source of this influx of vice and profligacy. It is a truth, highly opprobrious to human nature, that men are never more dissolute, depraved, and destitute of shame and humanity, than in periods of war, pestilence, and convulsion, both natural and moral; that is, in seasons of the most awful desolation, and among the most frightful forms of calamity and havock!!! But the licentiousness of the nunneries owed nothing to the mortality of 1348, except the opportunity of manifesting itself; its causes must be sought in the general morals of the era; in the motives and views, which at that time induced persons to enter the monastic condition; and in the natural workings of Solitude upon the minds of such as dedicated themselves to it, on such principles, with such habits, and such dispositions.

How far the inroads of incontinence had extended in the imaginations of the nuns, may be learnt from the account given by a strange bigot, ALVAREZ PELAGIUS, of the labour and perplexity he had encountered in freeing the sisters of a convent near Avignon, from a species of devilkins, who visited them by night, teasing and importuning them to deeds of unholiness. The usual castigations,

gations, penances, and exorcisms, had been ineffectually employed; the imps returned every evening in despite of them; and the good prelate relates, that the nuns, in their confessions, had declared to him they were grown so used to the familiarity of these foul spirits, that they saw and felt them in their beds, without alarm or horror.

THE frailty of the female monastics was even an article of regular taxation; and the Holy Father did not disdain to swell his treasury with the price of their impurity. Any nun who had been detected, whether within or without the walls of her convent, in the practice of unchastity, might be reinstated in all her dignity and virtue, by the redeeming grace of a few ducats. This scandalous traffic of morality, this impious quackery of the soul, which professed to purge it of its most flagitious stains, by the saving efficacy of money, speedily extinguished every principle of morals both in confessors and their penitents; and the latter were only concerned to make such a market of their unchaste practices, as should enable them to purchase absolution from the consequences of their guilt, and retrieve the salvation they had endangered, by indulging the inclinations which led to it.

THE List of all offences, for which absolution  
might,

might, on proper consideration, be purchased of the Holy Pontiff, may be found in the *Römische Consleytaxe*, published at Cologne, in 1515; from which the following articles are a faithful extract:

“ For full remission of sin to the murderer of a  
 “ brother, sister, husband, wife, father or mother;  
 “ *so many ducats.* For full remission of sin to an  
 “ ecclesiastic guilty of incontinence with a holy  
 “ sister, together with entire restoration of all  
 “ offices, dignities, and revenues, of which his  
 “ offence had deprived him; *so many ducats.* For  
 “ the full absolution of an unchaste or adulterous  
 “ nun, together with reinstatement in her offices  
 “ and honours, and qualification to become Abbess;  
 “ *so many ducats, &c. &c.*”

As in general the bishops exceeded the inferior clergy in riot and profligacy, as much as in authority and opulence, their superintendence of the cloisters was not greatly conducive to their purity; and when a really pious, vigilant, and austere prelate, (no very frequent phenomenon at any time) attempted to secure the strictness of their manners, by frequent visitation, the single efforts of such an one, however firm and sagacious, were rarely attended with much success. Yet inquiries were sometimes made by the reverend fathers, with surprising minuteness; and as the bishops of that age were not so expert in tracing incontinence

incontinence and incest in the countenance, as the present physiognomical generation, they were constrained, in tracing the wanderings of the female monastics, to push their researches sometimes to the disregard of respect to the sex, and even in defiance of the laws of decency.

In the fifteenth century, various convents in his diocese were visited with attention and rigour, by AMBROSIVS, Bishop of *Camaldoli*; but he found virtue and decency expelled from all; nor was it in the power of his influence to reinstate them. The first cloister he examined appeared to be almost avowedly an open brothel; and when AMBROSIVS thundered his just indignation against such enormous and scandalous sacrilege, the Abbess, equally awed and astonished by a severity and zeal so extraordinary, was fain to confess, that “In fact  
“ every thing was not quite regular and pure in  
“ her convent; that to restrain the ardour of  
“ youth was impossible; but herself and the more  
“ ancient sisters, carefully kept themselves out of  
“ the stream of pollution; and endeavoured, by  
“ their austere chastity, to expiate the looseness of  
“ the juniors.” The bishop had too little faith, or too much piety, to accept this excuse: he explored the whole extent of the evil, and investigating its causes, the result of his inquiries was a peremptory prohibition to receive any male visitors, whether



whether clergy or laity; and at his departure he threatened, should he hear of any future disorder in their conduct, to have their house destroyed, and its possessions confiscated.

He then proceeded to another convent, the character of which, though it had been represented as suspicious, AMBROSIOUS found ground, as he thought, to approve. But he had scarcely quitted it, when he was convinced he had been imposed on; and that all the nuns whom he had been induced to deem vestals, were actually notorious harlots. Deeply chagrined by this information, and mortified to have been so grossly duped, he revisited the house, and inquiring more accurately, discovered, among other enormities, that a neighbouring Prior had actually seduced, and carried away, one of the sisters. He learnt too, from her own confession, that the Abbess herself had become a mother, after having solemnly assumed the obligations of her state, and dedicated herself to eternal chastity.

WHEN SIXTUS IV, at the close of the fifteenth century, ascended the papal throne, the first step that distinguished his government of the church, was an attempt to introduce a reform in the manners of the Italian nunneries; the conduct of which he committed to the Canon Bossus, whose  
severity

severity of principles, and inflexible temper, peculiarly recommended him to such an office. The chief purpose of the plan was to repress the indecent and flagitious practices of the Genoese convents, where the nuns lived in defiance of religion, honour, and modesty; and instead of being the purest, were the most dissolute and shameless of their sex. Bossus did not disappoint the expectations formed of his probity and zeal: he admonished the nuns, both from the pulpit and in the confessional chair, with the most impressive earnestness; he endeavoured to gain the support of the civil power, and pointed out by what means the chastity of the convents might be best preserved and vindicated. He despised the calumnious reports, and secret hostilities, of such as his efforts had offended; and by his zeal, application, and sagacity, appeared to have ensured success to his enterprize; when the incorrigible objects of his solicitude, having purchased the connivance of the magistracy, relapsed into their old train of irregularity and licence. More rigorous measures were, in consequence, employed to enforce the discipline of the monasteries; but no general reform in their morals was ever effected; though a few nuns, penetrated by the remonstrances and denunciations of Bossus, abandoned their impious courses, and became exemplary for their penitence and piety.

THE disorderly manners of the monks and nuns, were, among the most urgent causes of the grand Reformation, unexpectedly accomplished in the sixteenth century, in spite of the number, power, authority, and obstinacy of its antagonists; and which is now considered and confessed by all rational and candid Catholics, to have been the most beneficial event that could have occurred, even for the Church it dismembered; while it is regarded by every philosophical moralist, as the greatest advance which Europe has made in illumination and morals, since the original introduction of the religion of which it corrected the abuses, and restored the purity.

Not less than a century prior to LUTHER'S reform, several theologians, who preached before the Council of Constance, accused the Fathers of that council, and all the ecclesiastics in the Christian world, as being, with scarce any exception, a tribe of the most dissolute and depraved sinners. The contemporary writers concur in representing the nunneries as places of rendezvous for the sensual and licentious of both sexes; as theatres of riot; as seminaries of indecency and opprobrium; and hot-beds of every depravity of which the human mind, abandoned to its passions, is capable. What was called the consecration of a young girl to the service of Heaven, was, in fact, a mere pretence to make

make her a sacrifice to sin and shame. Notwithstanding the efforts of a few pious and politic prelates to restrain, if it were not possible to suppress, these evils, so injurious to the credit of the Church, and so dangerous to its stability, no thorough amendment had been effected when the Protestant Reformation arrived. The gross and shameless indulgencies of the nuns were indeed changed, with the character of the age, into a more elegant and decent enjoyment of those pleasures, which having, on entering their holy state, renounced, they could not indulge without at least the crime of perjury, nor conceal without hypocrisy. They confined their intrigues to the Clergy, with whom their intercourse was less suspected, and who, equally with themselves, were interested in secrecy. Grown more prudent, if not more scrupulous, the nuns appeared at public assemblies masked; instead of dancing with the cavaliers, they contented themselves with hanging on the arms of the canons; and though they still indulged in nocturnal rambles, preserved their sacred habit from scandal by a strict attention to disguise. In the present still more refined and purified age of the Catholic church, the instructions of the Jesuit BENZI, as I have been recently informed by a Romish ecclesiastic, whose knowledge of the vices of the world is equalled only by his pity for its frailties, and the austerity of his own virtue,

are faithfully followed in every Italian convent. Such, from the time of the first anchorets to the age in which we live, have been the fruits of Solitude, when cultivated in the tedious idleness of caves and cells.

THE more honest and discreet among monks and hermits, have chosen to shun the seductions of the passions in Solitude; but others, rash enthusiasts, or hypocritical and artful pretenders, instead of preserving themselves from unchaste vices, by a prudent escape from their allurements, braved the continual and fiercest assaults of the enemy; and in the narrow lifts of a cell or cloister, provoked the presence of the peril they should have feared and fled.

BAYLE has forcibly shewn the imprudence and bad policy of such expedients. "The power of "sensual desire," says he, "is not of a nature "to be subdued by confronting or opposing it. "Our victory over this enemy is best ensured by "retreat. We must not provoke so dangerous a "foe; but above all, we must not seek to engage "him where he is strongest."

OF these undeniable and forcible truths, none was more fully convinced than the holy JEROME. In such matters he was well versed; and nothing

Can be more just than what he has written on this  
 subject in his epistle to VIGILANTIUS: "He who  
 " knows the instability of man, and the weakness  
 " of his boasted nature, will sedulously avoid the  
 " shocks that may endanger its brittle substance.  
 " Even in Solitude he will dread the risks to  
 " which his wayward and infirm disposition ex-  
 " poses him, and will not deem himself safe even  
 " there, where there appears no enemy. But you  
 " will ask, VIGILANTIUS, why then does JEROME  
 " cover himself with the obscurity of an unpro-  
 " fitable retirement? I will inform you; that he  
 " may not hear thee, VIGILANTIUS; that he may  
 " not see thee; that thy intemperate rage may  
 " not awake his choler, and provoke him to pas-  
 " sionate contention with thee. Another motive  
 " is, that he may escape the enticements of bad  
 " women, and be safe from the seducing graces of  
 " the beauteous. You will say this is not con-  
 " quest, but flight: JEROME should oppose his foe  
 " with constancy and valour, and undergo the  
 " toils and perils of the fight, that he may merit  
 " the honours of victory. I confess to thee my  
 " cowardice; distrusting my strength, I decline  
 " the uncertain combat. If I retreat, I do not  
 " stand in need of victory; if I stand my ground,  
 " I may gain none. I must escape death, either  
 " by strength or speed; and though by flying, I do  
 " not obtain the honours, I secure the benefits of  
 " victory.

“ victory. Is not he a fool, who sleeps by the  
 “ viper, because it is possible he may not be stung  
 “ by her mortal tooth? 'Tis true, he may not  
 “ experience the venom of the reptile; and then  
 “ what has he gained, which he did not before  
 “ possess? But should he taste it—and does he  
 “ not deserve to do so?—how infinite and irre-  
 “ parable his injury!”

THE dangers which in Solitude lie waiting even for temperate and chaste spirits, and the phrensy into which hot and eager imaginations may there be hurried, have hitherto been exemplified in the instances of Christian anchorets and monastics. But if we turn the eye to *Siam*, *Japan*, or *China*, to other countries, and to other systems, we view the same operation, and similar consequences: we see, that under similar circumstances, the effects are the same, and that, in every region, an obstinate attachment to Solitude is productive of equal misery and corruption.

TOHIN, a Chinese philosopher, observes, “ The  
 “ credulous vulgar implicitly believe all that is  
 “ fraudulently asserted of the sanctity and purity of  
 “ the bigots and hypocrites who chuse their man-  
 “ sions in remote and lonely places. They fondly  
 “ deem these spots asylums of virtue and chastity,  
 “ sheltered from the disgraceful and sordid vices  
 “ which

“ which defile society ; and admire the resolution  
 “ and pious zeal of these holy men, who have  
 “ abandoned their families and their worldly pos-  
 “ sessions. Vain supposition ! Have they aban-  
 “ doned their wants and their desires ? Can they  
 “ quit the earthly frame, that clothes their im-  
 “ mortal spirit, or loosen themselves from the ima-  
 “ ginations, made up of sensual thoughts and de-  
 “ sires, which possess and govern the mind of  
 “ every mortal. The force of constitution must  
 “ rage with more uninterrupted action than amid  
 “ the occupations of the world ; and the passions,  
 “ unnaturally restrained, will struggle to expand,  
 “ and burst forth with exasperated vehemence.”

CHASTITY suffered a foul defeat among the nuns  
 of *Siam*, when, at the commencement of their in-  
 stitution, they dwelt conjointly with the monastics  
 of the other sex : a general pregnancy betrayed the  
 infidelity of both to their vows. The Jesuit CHAR-  
 LEVOIX, relates in his *History of Japan*, that among  
 the professors of the religion of *Budso* and *Sinto*,  
 were cloisters of pretended virgins, entitled *Bi-*  
*counis*, whose care was to preserve their own chas-  
 tity, and form the growing race of females to  
 virtue and honour. In many parts of *Japan*, the  
 houses of the *Bicounis* are built in the vicinity of  
 those of the *Bonzas* ; and in their temples, which  
 are common to both orders, they join indiscrimi-



minately in the adoration and worship of their idols. The *Bicounis*, as is generally the case with female instructors, profess an extravagant prudery of sentiment: yet it is notorious, that they maintain an illicit commerce with their sanctified neighbours, the *Bonzas*; and they have the reputation of having invented the art, much practised in *Japan*, of secretly suppressing the evidence of their amours, by a premature destruction of its natural consequences.

THESE examples, are sufficient to remove every doubt of the mighty dominion of Solitude over the mind; whether touched with the purest love, or inflamed by the fierceness of grosser desire. But other facts will serve to shew, that not only is it fertile, in producing errors of the taste, and depravities of the imagination, but is also a nursery of those more criminal passions, that render man an enemy and a horror to his brethren,

NOTHING is so dangerous, as the want of some pursuit to interest the passions, to busy the imaginations, and to employ the faculties. Active and fiery spirits are frequently goaded to the wildest outrage and enormity, by that restlessness which in them attends on leisure. Even in social life the dangers of idleness are of the greatest moment: they destroy the repose and ease of the individual; they threaten the tranquillity and safety of the State,

State. The ancient legislators and statesmen were peculiarly suspicious of habits of indolence; regarding them as the nurse of every civil and moral corruption. DRACO and PISISTRATUS punished laziness with death, judging this severe sentence necessary to exterminate a vice to which man is by nature so prone, and which is so ruinous to his character and manners. PERICLES sent colonies to *Chersonesus, Naxos, Andros, Thrace*, and even to *Italy*; to relieve *Athens* from the lazy citizens, whose useless lives, neither employed in virtuous actions, nor guarded from guilt by habits of industry, rendered them in the eyes of this sagacious statesman, objects of alarm and precaution. This principle it is, which makes the false wants of great nations the means of their safety and quiet: by engaging the attention and occupying the hands of multitudes, who otherwise left in a restless indolence, would employ themselves in fomenting mischief and disorder in the community. To involve the English capital once more in flames, it would perhaps be sufficient to suspend for one week the labours of the populace; they would thus become an aptly disposed train of combustibles, which kindled by any casual spark of enthusiasm, or collision of factious animosity, or fired merely by their own internal fermentation, would burst into tumult, rapine, massacre, and all manner of enormity.

It is strange perhaps, but certainly true, that more bad passions have been calmed and prevented by sewing and knitting, than by all the precepts of prudence, or all the lessons of morality. An excellent English writer, whose works not only exhibit a general acquaintance with life, but disclose a profound knowledge of human nature, admires the wisdom of those who instituted the scheme of female education; and provided that every woman, whatever her rank, should be taught some employment, by which she would be enabled to fill up the vacuities of domestick and sedentary leisure. "I know not," he says, "how much of the virtue and happiness of the world may be the consequence of this judicious regulation. Perhaps the most powerful fancy might be unable to figure the confusion and slaughter, that would be produced by so many piercing eyes, and vivid understandings, turned loose at once upon mankind; with no other business than to sparkle and intrigue, to perplex and destroy."

IDLENESS was the great root of all the vices, and chief instigator of the crimes, that marked the characters and conduct of the Oriental nuns. Few of them had any taste for science, or habits of reflection, to charm, or even to relieve that weariness of existence which was the universal scourge. Few of them possessed talents, or had in the least cultivated

vated reason; all were full of a blind, but headlong zeal; all were fretfully impatient of their forlorn condition. In the infancy of monachism, its votaries did not indeed manifest any disposition to disturb the order and quiet of Society; but in the fourth century their conduct grew alarming, and their character became considered as dangerous. The rulers of the Roman Empire began to be aware of the expence and danger of feeding so many hives of useless and irritable drones. Multitudes, who either from indolence or pusillanimity, shrunk from the military or civil duties to which their situation in life summoned them, sought exemption from their discharge in the indolent piety of monasteries. This practice at length prevailed so generally, and so greatly to the impoverishment of the State, that soon after the year 370, VALENTINIAN and VALENS enacted, that all the hypocritical deserters of their just duties should be dragged from their retreats, and compelled to resume the offices they had scandalously avoided. VALENS even ordered the monks, who refused to discharge their obligations to society, either in municipal or martial functions, to perish under the painful and ignominious scourge of the public executioner. EUNAPIUS says, that the monks of his time were indeed in appearance men, but they led the life, and were actuated by the appetites of swine; and were equally distinguished by the nauseous filth  
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of their dress and persons, and the scandalous turpitude of their manners.

It would be the grossest error and delusion to form any conception of the real life of the Egyptian monastics, from the rules originally prescribed for their observation to protect them from the dangerous influence of solitude. The first chiefs and institutors of convents appear to have deemed bodily labour necessary to the members of their communities, both as an amusement and occupation; and it was a maxim among them, that a laborious monk had but one Devil to combat, while an idle one must withstand the attacks of a legion. The early professors of a life of solitude, removed far from the ways of man into barren wastes, where, the stream excepted, nature denied even the most common of her blessings; they dwelt in caves or huts; and striving to tame the rudeness of the desert, continually laboured, when not engaged in their pious offices, to make the unfriendly and stubborn earth yield them some palatable nutriment. Of those who did not transport themselves so far from the cities, some were weavers, others masons, and others pursued their accustomed labours in the garden and vineyard. Many, while they served heaven, tilled the ground, platted baskets, planted, pruned or felled trees, and exercised various manufactures; all at stipulated times and in  
stated

stated quantities, which, however, they voluntarily exceeded without exacting any increase of recompense. Even while occupied in their ordinary labours, Religion was not suspended; for when their hands were active their voices were equally busy in psalms or prayer; and though the more perfect in sanctity confined themselves the whole day in their cells, they filled their leisure with a variety of manual arts, and kept their minds, during these employments, constantly attached to the meditation of the scriptures. If this writer may be relied on, we must believe that the time and attention of a monk were never left vacant, and that offices of piety and humanity, or exercises of mind and body, were equally incumbent on, and sedulously practised by, all such fraternities.

PALLADIUS has left a description of the manners of an Oriental convent, which he had himself visited; but his relation, instead of informing, would deceive, were it received as a fair example of the interior of monastic institutions during the early ages of Christianity; or should we be induced by it to conclude that such habits would ever be generally and long cultivated among recluses. In this monastery, which contained between three and four hundred brethren, PALLADIUS learnt there were twelve clothiers, seven smiths, fifteen fullers and bleachers, and a like proportion of the exercisers

exercisers of every useful occupation. Every one of these, when not engaged in his devotions, was active in his appropriate craft; and whatever was manufactured by the industrious brotherhood, beyond the consumption of its own wants, was imparted to the less expert and laborious inhabitants of the adjacent female monasteries. They grazed cattle also, and disposed of the flesh partly in the public market, and partly among their own sick. The inhabitants of this monastery rose at an early hour, and each, without delay, applied to his peculiar avocation. Some dressed such of their viands as required the offices of fire, while others prepared the tables, and covered them with bread, olives, herbs, and the more simple articles of their food. About noon the weaker brethren took their first refreshment; others followed them as their strength or patience failed; and some of more stubborn fortitude or hardier frame than the rest, were accustomed to interrupt their fast only every second or third day. In the intervals their whole time was consumed in offices of devotion, or works of utility; one laboured in the fields; another tended the garden; this made garments; that the materials of them; some read; others wrote; many made mats, baskets, and various articles of wicker-work; and all were familiar with the scriptures, which most of them indeed could repeat.

THESE

THESE rules, devised by PACHOMIUS, it must be allowed, were, notwithstanding their severity, well adapted for the observation of monastics; and if practised, might have served, in a great measure, to disarm religious Solitude of its evils. But no cloister ever long conformed to the regulations appointed at its establishment; and the Oriental Monks in particular, if judged by their laws rather than their lives, would be totally misapprehended in their character. JEROME says, "They were commanded to labour, that the Devil might never find their minds open to admit his temptations." But it is evident from all ecclesiastical history, that they lived in total idleness, or busied themselves in every thing rather than the offices of their state, and duties of their religion.

NOTHING was more contrary to the spirit of their profession, than continually roving about the cities; it was indeed a complete abandonment of their state; and yet these holy drones were always swarming about the streets without business, and even without any other purpose than to avoid the solitary retreats to which they had vowed to confine themselves, and to enter which, they had, perhaps, renounced their professions, offices, companions, and families.

THE bishops too frequently abused, instead of  
correcting,



correcting, this propensity of the monks to depart from the irksomeness of their religious duties, without returning to the discharge of their civil. At different times they drew vast multitudes of anchorets from the deserts, to fight with, or more frequently to massacre the heretics. ANTONIUS travelled to *Alexandria*, attended by a numerous host of solitary ascetics, to curse the errors and persons of the Arians in that city; and BASIL the Great, by similar measures, contributed, in defiance of their prescribed customs, to gather the monks into cities. In consequence of the representations made of their misbehaviour and excesses, the elder THEODOSIUS, in the year 390, commanded that all monastics should retire to solitary places; "For that many of them, whose lives should be marked only by their singular quietness, patience, and regularity, distinguished themselves as most dangerous disturbers of the public tranquillity." The works it was their duty to perform, they neglected, and were officious in meddling with the affairs interdicted to them; to trouble, to spoil, and to destroy.

THE Patriarch of Alexandria having obtained permission of THEODOSIUS the Elder to demolish the Pagan temples, besought the monks to lend this work the assistance of their prayers. They readily granted him a more effectual aid, and  
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issued forth armed with clubs, stones, and instruments of iron. The more beautiful and magnificent the edifice, the more eager was the zeal of the monks for its destruction; and all these fine works of antiquity were burnt and demolished; without any regard to their beauty, and with a sort of Vandalism which reflected little honour on their destroyers. Nor did the pious rage confine itself to Alexandria: the monks proceeded from one temple to another in the adjacent country and towns, every where manifesting but too much avidity for destruction and plunder.

ANOTHER excess of which the monks were apt to be guilty, was the pouring in floods into the cities, to oppose, with indecent menaces, the course of justice on their guilty brethren. After the insurrection in *Antioch*, under the elder THEODOSIUS, they descended in heaps from the neighbouring hills, to arrest the uplifted arm of the offended magistrate; and sat for whole days before the door of the tribunal, prepared to rescue their criminal companions by violence, when led to suffer the sentence of the laws. Many of them forcibly detained the judges in their way to the court, and would not suffer them to proceed till they had promised to pronounce favourably on the offenders; Yet if the ministers of justice yielded to their importunity, these inconsistent beings kissed their hands,

hands, and embraced their knees with transports of gratitude.

THE Emperors were, at various times, compelled to revoke their edicts by the art and violence of the refractory monks; their influence and authority, in time, grew really formidable; and THEODOSIUS the Great, having more than once consulted with an Egyptian fanatic, the abbot John, respecting the event of certain hazardous undertakings, sanctioned their presumptuous forwardness, and encouraged their inclination to busy themselves with secular affairs, and neglect the duties properly incumbent on them: by thus authorising a change of their manners, he led to the utter corruption of their morals. As early as the fourth century, they excited tumults and insurrections, and were guilty of many unjustifiable infractions of the peace, and order of society; and in the fifth, their inordinate passion to procure establishments and structures for the accommodation of their luxuries, rather than of their wants, urged the indigent and houseless monks to the most unworthy artifices, and most improper practices. Their vices, at length, grew so palpable and flagrant, as to become proverbial among the people; and to declare any one "as villainous as a Monk," was deemed the highest opprobrium that could be offered. One of the most acute and  
valuable

valuable critics of ecclesiastical history, justly compares the Oriental Monks of this period to a mercenary corps, ready to serve its own interest, by co-operating with any party; and he asserts that their fanaticism inclined indifferently to the People or the Throne, as they hoped to profit by their support of one or the other.

THE Oriental Devotees pursued every object, however trivial, with the most vehement and impatient passion, as though it were of the most serious importance. In the fifth century, a verbal strife on the mystery of the incarnation was long and fiercely debated between the Patriarch of Constantinople, NESTORIUS, and CYRILLUS, the Patriarch of Alexandria; who, as usual in such disputes, branded each other with the name of Heretics. NESTORIUS was furious and intolerant; CYRILLUS artful, insolent, and ambitious. The dispute was at length about to be determined by a Synod, which met at *Ephesus*; when CYRILLUS appeared, to maintain his tenets; attended by a large body of Egyptian sailors; and not contented with such a reinforcement of his cause, he secretly incited the monks of *Constantinople* to assert his doctrines. The Archimandrites \* accordingly collected their monks, and advanced with them to

\* Superior of abbots or monasteries.

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the emperor's palace, chaunting psalms in alternate choirs of five hundred voices. They sought the presence of the emperor, while their followers surrounded the palace, rending the air with their pious vociferations. The emperor was cautious enough to receive their chiefs with gentleness and condescension, and desired them to collect their several assemblies in the church of the martyr Marjui. They obeyed; and the vast multitude at once orderly and tumultuous, still singing, marched in procession to the appointed spot, where it was soon announced to them that their petitions for Crallus were fully granted by the emperor, and they were requested to depart in peace. The church rang with their triumph; and Nestorius was ordered to be cursed as a Heretick by all the inhabitants of Constantinople. The psalms and hymns, which were employed as weapons on this occasion, gave the whole more the air of a festival, than a civil sedition.

In the year 399 the Egyptian monks rose against the Archbishop of Alexandria, Theophilus, because he condemned the error of the *Anthropomorphites*, in believing and teaching, that the Deity had a form and body like the human. The Bishop found himself in the most imminent jeopardy, from the vast and unruly assemblage of zealous and intolerant monks, whom this dispute had drawn to Alexandria; he rescued

himself by an adroit appeal to their prejudices. "Methinks, said THEOPHILUS," addressing the multitude, "in your faces I behold the countenance of the majesty of heaven." The well-timed compliment propitiated their pride, and appeased their fury; all exclaimed, "Since thou at last believest, that God has a countenance even as we have, we will not slay thee! Curse ORIGEN, and depart in peace."

WELL had it been however, for the credit of the monks, and the peace of the world, if they had uniformly conducted their tumults in so harmless a manner. But they generally argued the most abstruse and mysterious doctrines, with more material and more desperate instruments. This is sufficiently exemplified, by the event of the contention between NESTORIUS and CYRILLUS; a contention resting altogether upon verbal distinctions, that merited no disquisition, and perhaps admitted no determination. EUTYCHES, the Abbot of a convent near Constantinople, had led for near seventy years, a recluse, austere, and most religious life: he had vowed never to step over the threshold of his monastery, except on occasions of indispensable necessity; and professed to have renounced all worldly affairs, habits and passions; yet had he not confined his attention to the care of his convent, having ever manifested himself a strenuous

champion of orthodoxy, and a zealous enemy to all Heretics. This good Abbot, hearing that NESTORIUS differed from him in certain fancies, on the mystery of the Incarnation, felt his indignation highly incensed against the Patriarch; and quitting the retreat, in which he had proposed to spend the remainder of his days, hurried with zealous haste, to proclaim to the Emperor, the perils, with which he conceived the damnable dogmas of the arch heretic NESTORIUS, threatened the purity and integrity of the Church.

UNFORTUNATELY, EUTYCHES himself was stigmatised as an Heretick by the sentence of the Church; and was held in great odium for his assertion, that the doctrines of Christianity were to be learnt from the scriptures, and not from the writings of the Fathers. To the Bishops of the Patriarchate of *Antioch*, he had rendered himself an object of terror and hatred, by accusing them to THEODOSIUS the Second, of inclining to the Nestorian heresy; and his ill offices had caused several to be precipitated from their high dignities into extreme disgrace and misery. No sooner therefore had he adopted some unpopular doctrines, concerning the nature of the Saviour, from the writings of the deceased CYRILLUS, than the whole episcopal body, thundered forth their Anathemas, and convening a council unanimously condemned

demned his opinions as heretical, unchristian and impious.

DIOSCORUS, the successor of CYRILLUS in the see of Alexandria, undertook the defence of EUTYCHES and his sentiments, and all the Egyptian Bishops with a host of monks, joined the standard of their Patriarch. In former contentions of this kind, the leaders had been contented with procuring from councils and synods, the condemnation of their rival's tenets, with fulminating curses, counter-curses, and excommunications, and reciprocally obtaining the deposition of their opponents; but now the exasperated sects proceeded to open engagements, attended with much slaughter.

THE chiefs of the two armies of monks were DIOSCORUS and DOMNUS; the latter a plain man, endowed with moderate abilities, who, having spent the greater part of his life in a rigid retirement, was too inexperienced in the manners of mankind, too ignorant of their passions and motives, to foresee the difficulties that might be avoided by timely address; or to surmount such obstacles, as were not by any precaution to be shunned. DIOSCORUS was a prelate of great talents and experience; subtle to elude the observation of others, while quick to penetrate into their characters and designs; rich in literary attainment, and fortunate in the possession



of an unmerited reputation for great sanctity. His episcopal seat had continued during sixty years in the family of his predecessor CYRILLUS; who relying on the indulgence of the Emperor, the connivance of the Imperial governors of Alexandria, and the support of the vast multitude of monks, dependant on them and their relations, had enlarged their authority, and rendered themselves almost absolute sovereigns of the Egyptian capital. This undue dominion Dioscorus strained beyond all bounds of moderation and humanity. He did not scruple even to insult the majesty of the Emperor, in the persons of his vicegerents in Alexandria, whom he disgraced, beggared, and imprisoned, whenever their measures opposed his will; or when he was in any way offended or displeased. He tyrannised with such absolute and rapacious despotism over the Alexandrians, that, but for the opposition of the Governor of Egypt, he would have speedily converted the opulent and populous city of Alexandria into a desert; and in addition to his reliance on the influence of his station and talents, he was supported at the court of Constantinople by a favourite eunuch, who, participating the spoils of his guilt, procured him in return a full impunity.

SUCH was the champion of orthodoxy, who led embattled squadrons of monks and anchorets from the Egyptian solitudes, to maintain the purity of  
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the Gospel! Such were the fruits of seclusion, in a century, that has been rashly applauded by the ignorant or the prejudiced, as an era of divine enthusiasm and pious tranquillity, and the golden age of the Christian Church.

It is unnecessary to proceed into a circumstantial detail of this contention; it is enough to mention that it was carried on with so intolérant an animosity, that to consider NESTORIUS as a brother Christian, was soon held a more unpardonable impiety, than it could have been to have deified an ape, or canonised JUDAS ISCARIOT. A few facts serve to shew the strange and misguided spirit with which the monastics of every class engaged in the whole of the controversy.

THE violence employed by DIOSCORUS, in a council held at *Ephesus*, against the bishops who did not embrace his tenets, exhibits the character of the age with so much accuracy and vivacity, that a brief view of it will tend to the information, if not to the satisfaction, of the reader. EUTYCHES having delivered to this council his profession of faith, EUSEBIUS, Bishop of *Dorileum*, contended, that conformably to the sentence of a former Synod, the Abbot should renounce his opinions as Heretical, and acknowledge the two natures of the Saviour. But though both the councils were

composed of nearly the same prelates, as fierce a clamour was now raised against EUSEBIUS, for maintaining, as had lately overwhelmed EUTYCHES for denying, then this very article, which had been solemnly declared an integral and essential point of faith.

THE former advocates of the double nature now railed against EUSEBIUS, declaring he deserved to perish by the most cruel and ignominious death, for persisting to assert a doctrine, the belief of which they themselves had so recently enjoined and vindicated. DIOSCORUS, not satisfied with a vague clamour of condemnation and reproach, demanded that all should elevate their hands as a sign that they reprobated the doctrine of the two natures, and condemned its teachers and believers. The language and tone of DIOSCORUS, his passionate gestures, the presence of his soldiers, and more than all, the menaces of his monks, who surrounded the place of consultation with a circle formidable by its number and violence, so intimidated the assembly, that all raised their hands, exclaiming, "Curfed be all who believe two natures in Christ! "let them be banished from the aid and protection of all Christians; let them be slain with the sword, or given to the beasts of the desert."

EUTYCHES was now declared an orthodox teacher;  
and

and his doctrines imposed on the general belief by the same fathers who had so lately denounced him as an Arch-Heretic, and proclaimed his opinion erroneous. But the tumult was far from being terminated: for the assembly, at the instigation of the Patriarch of Alexandria, proceeding to condemn, and depose from their dignities, the adversaries of the successful Abbots, EUSEBIUS of *Dorileum*, and FLAVIAN of *Constantinople*, the latter prelate strongly protested against the sentence, as iniquitous; and accused DIOSCORUS of unbecoming and criminal practices. This was the signal for a general uproar. The enraged Patriarch commanded his monks to enter the lists of controversy, and decide the question. Nothing could be more complete than their obedience. They rushed into the chamber armed with various instruments of violence. Every bishop who had pronounced the deposition of FLAVIAN unjust, was, by the order of DIOSCORUS, unmercifully beaten; and he himself so inhumanly handled the unfortunate prelate, against whom his rage was principally addressed, that he died soon after.\*

\* This Council (which was held in 449) was afterwards called *Latrocinium Ephesinum*, or *Conventus Latronum*. FLAVIAN was banished to Epipas, in Lydia; and there it was he died soon after, in consequence of his scandalous usage. Before his death he appealed to LEO; and this appeal produced another Council, in which EUTYCHES was once more condemned, and the savage DIOSCORUS deposed.

THESE

THESE, and numberless other evils, were perpetrated in the attempt to establish the Catholic faith, respecting the mystery of the incarnation, and the equivocal nature of the Redeemer. It is melancholy to reflect, that while in every essential point of doctrine both parties were agreed, their violence and ferocity were employed only to establish abstract terms, and to settle metaphysical distinctions.

IN all these schisms which deform and disgrace the annals of the Church, the monks were ever personally active. Without them no tumult was excited; their hearts were always eager, and their arms ready, to fix the fluctuating tenets of the age not by reason or persuasion, but by clamour, by violence, and by blood.

TIMOTHEUS, surnamed *Ailouros*, or the cat, an Egyptian monk, deserves to be mentioned, as his history affords a striking instance of the passions, engendered in monastic solitude. This monk, a short time after the conclusion of the Eutychian controversy, in 457, felt an aspiration to elevate himself to the episcopal and patriarchal seat of Alexandria: for some such design as this was in general the more immediately operative cause of all these zealous disputes. AILOUROS perceived, that could the Egyptian monks be brought to  
create

create a tumult in his favour, nothing offered so ready an accomplishment of his wishes; and he devised an ingenious expedient to engage them to assist his purpose. Cloathing himself in a white garment, he crept, in the dead of the night, to the cells of his companions, and through a tube that at once disguised and magnified his voice, hailed every monk by his name. If his salutation was acknowledged, *The Cat* proclaimed himself an ambassador from Heaven, and in the name of the Lord, commanded the respondent to join his brethren in procuring the deposition of that Nestorian Heretic, the Patriarch PROTERUS, and raising to his episcopal seat the orthodox TIMOTHEUS. The monks were implicit in their obedience to the mandate: they regarded the wily Cat as a Heaven-elected patriarch, and burning with fanatical zeal, hastened under his guidance to *Alexandria*, where they excited a tremendous commotion.

A DESPERATE rabble assisted his purpose, and prepared to maintain his election by their customary violence and outrage. This lawless multitude advanced to the principal church of the city, where two bishops who had been deposed for their misconduct, ordained TIMOTHEUS Bishop of *Alexandria*, and Metropolitan of *Egypt*.

PROTERUS, the legitimate Patriarch, astonished  
at

at this shameless and audacious enterprize of an obscure monastic, but well aware of the temper of his foes, abandoned his palace, and gaining the church of ST. QUIRINUS, sought shelter in the font of that edifice. On former occasions this sanctuary had been respected by Heathens and Barbarians; but it afforded no protection from the ambition of the successful impostor. The blood of the innocent and venerable Patriarch was spilled in that awful place where the most guilty should have found forbearance. Six other ecclesiastics who accompanied him, shared his fate, and their bodies were left on the spot that witnessed their massacre. The corpse of the Patriarch only was removed; and after having been dragged to a public part of the city, was exposed on a gibbet to the scandalous insults of the brutal populace. To complete their unmanly and savage outrages, the mangled remains of the unfortunate Prelate were burnt, and the ashes scattered in the air, that his body might be robbed of those rights of sepulture which were not denied to the vilest malefactors.

As early as the close of the fourth century, THEOPHILUS, Patriarch of *Alexandria*, in an epistle addressed to the Synod, describes the Egyptian monks in the following terms:—"They wound their limbs," says he, "with sharp instruments, to cover themselves with a semblance of patience" and

“ and humility, or mangle and even mutilate their  
“ faces, to win the admiration and homage of the  
“ credulous multitude. Some curtail their tongues,  
“ thinking to shew by the tardiness and indistinct-  
“ ness of their speech, the vehemence and reso-  
“ lution of their piety; and all substitute for ge-  
“ nuine faith and devotion, some hollow and per-  
“ nicious counterfeit.” THEOPHILUS had himself  
traversed the wastes of *Nitria*, and visited the  
cheerless dwellings of these anchorets, to read and  
condemn, in the presence of all the most famous  
Saints, the writings of ORIGEN: but instead of  
meeting him, who was the chief of the Egyptian  
Church, with reverence and obedience, they had  
attempted to murder him. They even prepared to  
perpetrate their sacrilegious violence in the church,  
concealing their clubs in branches of palm, and  
disguising their sanguinary purposes under the  
robes of piety and semblance of godliness.

So furious and undaunted were the Oriental  
monks, that the soldiers of the Greek Emperors  
cautiously avoided any contest with them. CHRYS-  
SOSTOM, though a warm friend and strenuous advo-  
cate of the monastic condition, was himself while  
passing through Cappadocia a sufferer from their  
violence; nor could the assistance of the military  
screen him from its effects. This celebrated father,  
by the intrigues of EUDOXIA and her paramour,  
Count



COUNT JOHN, had been rendered obnoxious to the feeble ARCADIVS, and in consequence of the Emperor's unjust displeasure banished into Armenia: On his way to the place of exile, he was overtaken by sickness, and detained in his bed at Cæsarea; the bishop of which, his ancient enemy, unmoved by his fallen fortune and helpless state, roused the animosity of the monks, and directed it against him.

ACCORDINGLY they soon kindled into a flame of zeal and fury; they surrounded the house in which lay the sick Saint, and threatened, did he not immediately depart, to burn it over his head. The garrison of Cæsarea marched to the scene of disturbance, and very courteously entreated the monks to be quiet; but their exhortations were received with contumely and defiance. "We have combated before now with braver fellows than you," cried the daring monks; "we have ere now put to flight the Imperial guard; and if you venture to oppose us, you shall be made bitterly to repent your presumption." The troops did not choose to provoke the performance of their threat; they addressed themselves to CHARASTROM, and humbly besought him to shun the malice of these bigots by an immediate retreat, however dangerous to his health his removal might be; owning that they could not undertake to defend

send him against their reverend opponents, whom they considered as fiercer than the beasts, the fellow tenants of their deserts.

THESE facts sufficiently demonstrate, that the continued Solitude of the Oriental monks, far from humanising their manners, purifying their hearts, or improving their habits, filled them with the most uncharitable and acrimonious passions; and nurtured in them the fiercest as well as foulest of vices.

THE regulations adopted in the monasteries of the West at the time of their institution, were nothing inferior to those planned for the Oriental convents by PACHOMIUS. Saint BENEDICT the champion of monachism, in the sixth century, commanded the monks of his order, to fence themselves against sinful actions and desires, by unremitting occupation in the cultivation of the earth, the instruction of youth, and every other useful labour both of body and mind. He trusted that an useful employment of their powers, might divert them from any vicious application of them; and that such as peculiarly devoted themselves to studious habits, might, by having a rational and virtuous object of their intellectual pursuits, escape the mischiefs to which the ardent and zealous mind is exposed,

expoted, by a solitary rumination on its own fancies and systems.

BUT all these admirable regulations were speedily neglected; and the riches and reputation which the convents obtained by their early attention to the instructions of their founder, were in a short time made use of to dispense with the perseverance in the practice enjoined them. They grew too lazy and insolent to cultivate the lands they had gained, either by redeeming them from the morasses and wilds and enriching them with cultivation, or by exciting the pious liberality of their opulent penitents. They accordingly received the services of the poorer among the laity, by whom their estates were tilled and the menial offices of the convent performed; without other recompense than the benefit which their souls might derive from the intercessions of the ecclesiastics; who were well content to barter their devotion against the industry of the world, and to pray for the salvation of such as laboured for their interest and pleasure. Having exchanged their long fasts and unfavory diet for frequent and dainty repasts, and substituted indolent pride for laborious humility, all traces of their original piety and virtue disappeared, they grew luxurious, haughty, rapacious, and fierce, and as early as the tenth century, had sunk

even to the lowest depths of intemperance and depravity. If any Abbot or Superior, with a virtue rare in those ages, strove to restore the ancient severity of discipline, or only to restrain the licence and outrages of his monks, they never failed to revile, intrigue, and conspire against him; and generally revenged themselves, for his endeavours to improve them, by his deposition or death.

THE Duke of BRITANY, learning with what fury ABELARD was persecuted by his contemporaries for those very qualities which should have secured him their admiration and encouragement; in order to afford him an asylum from their invidious hatred, named him Abbot of the convent of Saint GILDAS. In this holy seclusion, ABELARD hoped he might find rest from his vexations, consolation or leisure for his grief, and ease and relief from all his difficulties. But instead of entering into a seat of piety and wisdom, into a mansion of tranquillity and order, he found the brothers of his convent relaxed in their manners, and abandoned to the most dissolute practices. His attempts to reclaim the disorderly monks, far from moving them to penitence, and leading them back to regularity and propriety, only provoked their rage; and having repeatedly failed in their efforts to poison him at their common repasts, they finally attempted (dreadful to relate!)

to give him his death in the sacramental elements.\* It is impossible to peruse the description he has given of his afflicting situation among these savage monks, without shuddering at the tendency of an ill-judged solitude, to harden the hearts and to render the manners of men inhuman, "I live," said he in one of his letters to ELOISA, "in a barbarous country, and among savage men. My walks are along the shore of a rough and tempestuous sea, and my companions are more turbulent, perfidious, and dangerous than its waves. Though sworn to obedience and chastity, they are infamous for riot and debauchery; and the only rule of the convent is to obey none. Ah ELOISA, wert thou to see our habitation, thou wouldst think it a butchery rather than a cloister. All the doors are covered with the feet of stags, the heads of boars, and the skins of vermin; the trophies of their victories in the woods. The cells of the monks, instead of exhibiting any signs of devotion, are filled with the horns of stags, or the implements of the chase. They obey no summons but the sound of the horn, or the noise of the hounds. They consume the whole day in hunting, and oh! that I could prevent their pursuing any pastime more culpable. But they

\* One of the community having eaten the food, prepared for ABELARD but casually rejected by him, died in consequence almost upon the spot.

" indulge in the foulest pleasures, and commit the  
 " foulest crimes ; and if I remonstrate with them,  
 " they answer me with revilings ; they surround  
 " me with snares ; I am daily in new perils from  
 " their envy and rage, nor scarce a moment does  
 " the sword of their base vengeance cease to  
 " suspend over my head."

SUCH were the monks of the twelfth century ;  
 such had they been for several preceding ages ;  
 such were they through several that followed ;  
 yet to the prayers and the masses of such dissolute  
 wretches, did all the princes and nations of above  
 half the known world confide their salvation ; ex-  
 pecting with certainty the Divine favour from the  
 efficacy of their intercession with the Fountain of  
 Purity and Goodness. To overwhelm them with  
 riches and privileges, was held to be the surest  
 passport to eternal bliss. Every tyrannical sove-  
 reign or noble, devoted to his pleasure and caprice,  
 and careless of his people's prosperity and happi-  
 ness, attempted to reconcile himself to Heaven,  
 by bribing the avarice or ambition of these mo-  
 nastics ; and secure of their absolution, scrupled  
 not to neglect every duty, and to perpetrate every  
 enormity.

ON a full consideration of their whole history,  
 we cannot but be convinced of this unpleasant  
 truth ;

truth ; that melancholy, inhumanity, and misanthropy, were the unfailing tenants of the hearts of the Oriental monastics ; and that few have ever been the monks whose breasts were entirely free from these passions. The discipline of the convent affords no lesson of gentleness, sympathy, and kindness. Enthusiasts, who are continually at war with the bias of their own nature, who renounce every rational enjoyment of life, are little like to interest themselves in the happiness of others, or to regard their sorrows with commiseration. Indifference and obduracy gradually render them callous to the touches of humanity. When the mind has been benumbed to the sense of all the joys of life, and blinded to its charms ; when all love of the world and its inhabitants has been solicitously expelled from the bosom, and replaced by no other sentiment of kindness and affection ; when man has separated himself from his brethren, yet has not united himself to his Maker, he renders himself void of fear or care for himself, of concern or pity for others.

OBEDURACY and misanthropy are vices scarcely to be avoided by the sincere monastic : they are indeed the natural result of his situation, the necessary product of his habits and views. Forced to reconcile himself to the loss of human enjoyments, by regarding them as vain and sinful, he nourishes a

rancorous contempt for all that do not, like himself, court misery, and defy and outrage nature: beginning by the alienation of his desires from their proper ends, he finishes by turning his affections from their natural objects; till at length he scorns and hates all those whom he should regard with benevolence at least, if not with respect. This stern and savage disposition soon vitiated the character of the Oriental recluses, and burst forth in those excesses which dishonoured Solitude and injured Religion.

THE solitary leisure of the most studious and inquisitive, consumed in curious and scrupulous speculation on subjects indifferent to human happiness, but remote from human apprehension, and enveloped in impenetrable mystery, was ever furnishing to the restless monks some vain and endless controversy, the agitation and decision of which was frequently accompanied with violence and bloodshed. The tranquillity of the Christian world was long disturbed by the metaphysical whim of SOPHRONIUS, a monk of *Alexandria*, who chose to maintain the existence of two wills in the person of the Redeemer, and to consider as impious heretics all who dissented from this doctrine. Not satisfied with spiritual intolerance, his disciples resorted to temporal violence; they excited the most fierce and dangerous commotions in Africa,



and in other parts defied and even endangered the authority of the Emperors.

IN the East, where monachism was first and most zealously cultivated, it continued through many centuries an unfailing source of religious dissention, and civil disorder. In that quarter of the Christian world, the monks formed the regular and standing armies of the ambitious prelates; and, serving every purpose of mad fanaticism, these Switzers of the Church ventured their own lives, and sacrificed those of others, for every absurd opinion; yet always in the persuasion, or under the pretence, that they were advancing the salvation of mankind.

IN the fourth century a long altercation mutually incensed the *Catholics* and *Donatists* on the occasion of an Episcopal election; and an obstinate contention, by no means free from rancour, ensued, respecting the forms necessary to the ordination of a legitimate Bishop, and the distinguishing characteristic of the true Church. In one thing both parties agreed; that there was only one true Church, namely, its own; and that all out of its pale were doomed to eternal perdition. Africa, the scene of the contention, was soon a spectacle of disorder and distress; for the Donatists, having collected a multitude of peasants to support, with  
arms,

arms, their discouraged and persecuted tenets, were defeated in an engagement with their equally violent and more numerous rivals ; and during thirteen successive years were oppressed and slaughtered without mercy. This was indeed the invincible conclusion of all these disputes, wherein opposite parties of violent enthusiasts imagined their respective notions the sum of all truth, and essence of all virtue ; and, not contented with the quiet and unmolested possession of them, were obstinate to compel others to receive and adopt them as the only true road to salvation. Shameful to Christianity as the truth may appear, it must be owned, that in these ages of the primitive Church no principle of toleration was to be found but among the barbarians. The very Goths disclaimed the violence of imposing upon the consciences of a conquered people ; and their ambassadors declared to BELISARIUS, what their actions uniformly verified, that “ no one who submitted to their law  
“ would be compelled to abandon his religion,  
“ but each be left unconfin'd in the belief of  
“ what his ancestors had taught, or his reason  
“ dictated. Yet were they not destitute of piety,  
“ nor their reverence for all holy places less than  
“ that of the Romans themselves.” Among those who assumed the name of Christians, while orthodoxy was the universal cry and the universal passion, creeds were framed and imposed by various  
sects,

sects, and hanging and burning for the salvation of hereticks and the glory of the Deity, were the common and approved methods of conversion employed by the greatest names in the early Church.

To what lengths fanatic fury would proceed for points of orthodoxy the most insignificant and contemptible, may be gathered from the ludicrous dispute, if we may be allowed to term it so, respecting the form of the cowl and beard of the crazy FRANCIS of *Affisi*. On this important subject the *Franciscans* and the *Capuchins* differed, each condemning the tenets of their opponents as heretical; and the idle contention respecting orthodox cowls and beards, was, as usual, debated with rancorous animosity; nor was it concluded without the effusion of blood.

SUCH have been the ridiculous and horrible fruits of that fanaticism, to the production of which the religion of meekness, charity, and brotherly love, was rendered instrumental; by the pernicious influence of an extravagant and unnatural attachment to solitude. To this must be imputed the birth and growth of that superstitious, trivial, passionate, and intolerant orthodoxy, which, during so many ages, swallowed up the reason and morals of Europe, and extinguished the spirit of genuine Christianity in darkness and cruelty. The duties  
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of humanity were contemned and neglected ; the affections of nature were renounced or suppressed ; real piety was unknown or unnoticed but by hatred and persecution ; and nothing was honoured or cultivated but the reputation of a rigid and sanguinary orthodoxy. This word contained the sum of Christian piety, through many centuries of ignorance, zeal, and intolerance; and the monks, while they made the earth drunk with the blood of such as denied their absurd or insignificant dogmas, every where pretended to justify their barbarities by asserting, that thus only was it possible to serve and save the true faith. Oh ! minds blinded with folly, and hearts vitiated with pride and inhumanity ! can that be the true faith which tears asunder the bands of Society, abolishes the ordinances of nature, authorises cruelty and horror, and scatters fury, strife, and ignorance through the world ?

LET us hope that the æra is at hand, wherein the religion of CHRIST, freed by the labours of pious, humane, and enlightened men, from the incumbrances, and purified from the stains, wherewith ignorant fanaticism and rapacious ambition have attempted to deform and disguise it, shall be restored to that divine simplicity, gentleness, and benevolence of nature, by which it was characterised when, seventeen centuries since, it emanated

emanated from the lips and acts of its great Author. Every Christian will then learn to render his life useful and happy, his death peaceful and confiding: *Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Protestants* of every denomination, will unite in a religion, that teaches to persecute and condemn no one; but to love, succour, console, and improve all. No absurd, austere, gloomy, and dispiriting duties, no irrational and unnatural penances and mortifications, will be then imposed on their practice to the ruin of their happiness; no sentiments of tyrannical and intolerant injustice and cruelty be breathed into their hearts, to vitiate their dispositions; none will be severed from his fellow by unfocial institutions, nor divided from him in affection by principles of solitary selfishness; and, if Reason or Religion counsel them occasionally to recede from society, they will, by communing with themselves, learn to prepare for a more complete and cordial discharge of their reciprocal duties.

## CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

## RETROSPECT AND CONCLUSION.

AFTER having endeavoured to develope the advantages and expose the dangers of Solitude; after having perhaps appeared, at one time, its romantic panegyrist, at another its harsh censor, not its unqualified adversary, all that now remains is to guard my opinions against misconstruction, by stating the result of my observations and reflections; and explicitly declaring the conclusions, which in my apprehension ought to be drawn from them.

By some I may have been reproached as the morose and gloomy enemy of social intercourse, as the advocate for a sullen and melancholy seclusion, which, interdicting the pleasures of mankind, would sour their tempers and destroy their affections; and, which excluding the communion of hearts and the interchange of reason, would plunge the world once more into the dark night of ignorance and barbarism, from which the establishment and cultivation of Society had rescued them. It is not improbable that others may accuse me of endeavouring to excite an undue alarm and antipathy against Solitude,  
of

of depreciating its uses, of aggravating its mischiefs, and of deterring men from the enjoyment of its advantages : By those, perhaps, it will be said, that my labours, instead of discountenancing, will serve only to encourage the spirit of licentious and frivolous dissipation, which maintains so pernicious and increasing a dominion over the present age. Both these opinions, however, are equally mistaken ; it has neither been my purpose to relax any civil duty or impair any social virtue ; still less to proscribe the use of rational retirement, and the practice of serious self-communion. Attachment to domestic pleasures and the culture of the fond and gentle affections, which are nursed in the arms of Friendship and the bosom of Love, will never injure the sentiments of the generous mind, or confine that charity and kindness of soul which expands into universal humanity and benevolence. Nor on the other hand, If that secession from the world, in which the solitary speculatist delights to dwell, may sometimes encourage in him some indifference to the services of others or disregard of their opinions ; if it may in some degree estrange him from their concerns by dividing him from their interests ; yet will it not necessarily render him devoid of the emotions of pity, or the sympathies of affection. The main purpose of the volume now presented to the reader is, to recommend, in the strongest manner, the

the necessity and propriety of qualifying extreme habits of solitary abstraction, by the practice of social virtues, and the enjoyment of social amusements—of correcting the self-sufficiency or indolence produced in retirement, by that urbanity which is most readily acquired in the world, in the company of the informed and polite.

PETRARCH, early in life and in the vigour of his genius, led by impassioned love, long persisted in renouncing society, that he might converse only with the immortal volumes of the learned dead, with the children of his fancy and the images of his unfortunate passion. The charming solitude of *Vaucluse* alone could enable him, not indeed to forget, but to endure the absence of his beloved LAURA ; and, during the summer of his life, he dwelt at a distance from the court, abhorring its manners and principles. Yet could he not finally subdue the impulse, that urged him to revisit his so long abandoned seat : his solitude had grown so irksome to him, that after twenty-years familiarity he was more eager to escape it than he had originally been to seek its friendly aid ; and he suddenly precipitated himself into all the tumult of the world, and all the gaiety of a luxurious city. The inhabitants of *Avignon* were amazed to behold the hermit of *Vaucluse*, the tender fugitive from society, the misanthrope of love, who had no enjoyment of  
existence



existence but among forests and rocks, all at once shining in assemblies and frequenting every scene of private and public festivity.

A HUMAN creature constantly pent up in seclusion, if he be not the most exalted soon becomes the most wretched of beings. To overcome the tedious chagrin so naturally attendant on solitude, it is necessary that its votary should possess a constant and uninterrupted state of health, and an imagination inexhaustible. He, who is destitute of these resources, when deprived of the communion of his fellow-creatures will find himself left without support or hold, and will either sink into idle and supine habits, or into prone and sordid indulgences. The history of the Oriental and other monastics, (of which the preceding chapters contain a few striking details, selected from many which might be produced,) furnishes testimony of this fact, the most copious and unequivocal; "It is not good for man to be alone:"—This command to seek communion with those, whom common tastes and equal faculties mark for our companions, was given by the great Author of Nature; it is written with characters sufficiently legible on the heart, which knows no content without social intercourse; and is enforced by the rude and imperfect condition of the earth, which expects its best improvement and highest value from the labours of man in a state of civilization. How false

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an estimate of himself, how frightful an image of his species then must he have formed, who like a certain famous French hermit, would choose his station on the summit of *Vesuvius*, as considering himself in less safety among his brethren than in the horrors of that dreadful gulph !

To that pride in our nature, which is leagued at once with selfishness and generosity, there is doubtless something flattering and seducing in the thought of producing our own happiness from ourselves ; of possessing stores of delight and amusement for all hours ; and living detached from the vices and follies of mankind, independent of their services, or even their intercourse. But were it true that the solitary enthusiast enjoyed a more intense and unperishable pleasure than the active inhabitant of the world, still the station of the latter would be the proper province of all, whom peculiar circumstances had not unfitted for the duties of social life or incapacitated for its pleasures. They are greatly deceived who suppose seclusion to be a more inexhaustible source of contentment than any other condition ; every joy of nature, drained too deeply to the dregs will nauseate : that which at first raised our admiration and afforded us delight, is by long continuance, or frequent recurrence, divested of all its attractions ; and the pleasures which we at first pursued with all the eagerness of passion,

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we at length view with indifference or avoid with disgust.

THE advantages which the world must be allowed to bestow may be easily conciliated and combined with those peculiar to retirement, by a reasonable vicissitude of the tranquil occupations of the one with the gayer recreations of the other. Nor is it less our duty than our interest to interchange them with each other. Every thing is virtuous that tends to bring men together, to blend and assimilate them in mind and disposition, and by a community of pursuits and enjoyments to unite them in a reciprocal sympathy of interests ; thus advancing the sources of human knowledge, and binding closer the ties of human love. As far as they conduce to this end every diversion and pastime is valuable : the feast, the ball, the assembly of the rich and noble are to be approved ; and the club of the artizan respected. The mind cannot retain its elasticity without that relaxation, nor its vigour without that exercise, which are perhaps rarely found combined but in the intercourse of companies, collected by some common pleasure, and thus attached by reciprocal kindness, esteem and confidence. A friendly entertainment or social meeting elicits the spirits, enlivens the reason, and while it unbends the rigour of virtue, at once excites and informs its energy. Let us not therefore morosely absent ourselves

ourselves from all publick places, nor refuse frequently to enter the social circle, in which the sensible, docile, and benevolent mind will never fail to discover some opportunity of enjoyment or instruction. Fully to relish the pleasures of society, and to enjoy its advantages, we must learn to listen with patience to error, and with forbearance to infirmity: to view without expressions of scorn or disgust, mediocrity of talents, illiberality of sentiment, and frivolity, or even grossness, of manners. We must not allow ourselves to indulge in emotions of indignant displeasure, if we fail to excite in others that interest for our own private pursuits which they create in ourselves; nor in impatience or contempt of the spectacles and sports that form the entertainment of those around us—We shall gain more by striving to participate of, as well as to contribute to, their satisfaction and cheerfulness: By a seasonable and moderate compliance we shall not only benefit and oblige others, but, little as it may be expected, we shall improve ourselves by becoming wiser and better, as well as more agreeable, companions.

Yet many there are, who are to be excused for withdrawing themselves from a continued intercourse with society, without justly incurring the reproach or contracting the vices of a fullen and unsocial melancholy. Some make themselves stran-

gers, only to render themselves more useful friends to society. They avoid the endearments of friendship and the caresses of the publick, more effectually and nobly to deserve them. Others, a prey to griefs which society could neither remove nor suspend, and averse to disturb the gaiety they are incapable of participating, voluntarily recede into quiet seclusion, where their cares cease to molest any but themselves. Many pursuits and acquisitions, the most glorious to the individual and the most useful to mankind, can be prosecuted and accomplished only in abstraction and silence: Many a generous and sublime spirit shows his attachment to his species, and toils for their improvement and interest, immured from their sight and escaped from their recollection; forgetting, in the anticipation of the benefits he may diffuse, the pleasures he might derive from the offices and intercourse of those to whom he dedicates his solitary exertions.

2. An attachment to solitude may be esteemed wise and innocent, when its indulgence fills the bosom with that inward calm and content, after which it had continued to pine in the gaiety and luxury of the world.—In this case, a just and necessary compliance with the inclinations of the heart, arising from the natural character or disposition; or impressed by habit, may be favoured without fear, and approved without vice. But when the tranquillity,

quillity, lost in the world, no less eludes the mind in the unmolested stillness of seclusion, we may conclude, that some defect of constitution frustrates its continual efforts, and condemns it to remain a stranger to serenity. The duties of active life should then be studiously cultivated, and its enjoyments solicited ; since if they cannot totally suppress this malady of the soul, they may assist in blunting its keenness, and suspending its importunity.

If involuntary disgust at the pleasures of the world, joined to an aversion at the spectacle of human misery which we cannot relieve, and vice which we are unable to correct or restrain, drive us into solitude ; if we then forget our discontent and aversion, in the calm of our retirement ; we may conscientiously obey the impulse, in firm confidence of its rectitude and justice. Our retreat is then necessary to ourselves, and may prove of the highest advantage to the world we relinquish. Removed from the sad scene of wretchedness and guilt, we learn a compassion more calm and discerning, and a virtue less passionate and indignant ; our anguish and hatred subside into a humane earnestness to alleviate and reform, and the counsels of solitary meditation rarely fail to point out the means of effecting the designs, which its generous exhortations inspire.

THE ardent mind should, however, restrain itself from yielding to the first movements of disappointment and disgust, with which the various and incongruous view of social life is so apt to affect those who, educated in the bosom of domestic privacy and used to the offices of friendship and attentions of kindness, hasten into the world in full expectation and high hope of meeting nothing there but what is just, amiable, and benevolent; and who are shocked at the discovery of that base selfishness and inhumanity, which actually deform the features of social manners, and disgrace the frame of civil institutions. To shrink immediately from all intercourse with mankind, to withdraw from the service of our fellow-creatures, though but too frequent among the most generous spirits when thus wounded, is yet but a cowardly desertion of their appointed station and appropriate duty: for it cannot be too much inculcated that, built as human happiness and improvement are upon human concurrence, it is equally incumbent on all to accommodate themselves to the manners of their contemporaries, as the only means of partaking of their happiness or adding to their knowledge or their virtues. But no duty forbids us to shun as much as possible the giddy rabble of fashion, the thoughtless votaries of dissipation, the lewd orgies of riot and intemperance: Nor is he to be esteemed imprudent or reprehensible, who mixing as little as he can help in the trivial

business of formality, and wholly avoiding the faithless pleasures of licentious indulgence, forms to himself a rational and virtuous plan of useful enjoyment, within the narrow circle of domestic life. There with a few amiable and faithful friends, and in the bosom of his chearful and affectionate family, their endearing fondness is sufficient to gratify all his desires of happiness ; while in their turn they are fully blest by his endearing attentions and complacent love.

How many virtuous inclinations are fostered and confirmed in solitude ! How many disguised and latent vices are detected and expelled ! How often is the soul invigorated and raised on the wing of contemplation to the noblest purposes. How are its resources developed and its powers directed to their accomplishment, with an energy and perseverance which the dissipation, interruption, and inquietude of public and active situations must necessarily forbid. It can be only an unworthy sentiment of cowardice or a miserable ignorance of what, when his resolution is roused, man can effect or become, that prompts us ever to exclaim with lazy despondence ; “ Alas ! here is the boundary and “ extremity of our powers ! ” Our powers have no bounds but the measure of our courage and industry ; and the more sensible any one is of his own weakness, the more eager and determined should he



he be to emancipate himself. Man is not condemned, like the tree, to remain in the same spot, and confined to the same views where chance or design may first have placed him : By a firm reliance on his own capacity, by an indefatigable and undiscouraged exertion of his native abilities, by repeated and steady reflection on his successes and failures, by that close and watchful scrutiny of his own heart, to which seclusion invites and for which it provides the opportunities, he may ascend from one state of improvement to another ; he may add acquisition to acquisition ; and by a gradual but continued progress arrive at an elevation of character, which in the earlier stages of his course appeared visionary and unattainable. In this, the noblest perhaps of human labours, solitude is the most effectual guide and auxiliary ; he, therefore, who aspires to accomplish such an undertaking, wisely and virtuously solicits its aid.

In short, it is only by excess, misapplication or abuse, that solitude becomes injurious.—But let it be remembered, that under similar circumstances of erroneous misuse or extravagant indulgence, the benefits of society, and the affections born in domestic enjoyment, may also be rendered pernicious. Nay, every gift of Providence, and every institution of man ; the elements of fire and water ; the faculties of strength and

and talents; the blessings of liberty or government; in proportion as their uses are great and numerous, become mischievous and vicious in their abuse.

ALL the inauspicious effects of Solitude, however, may be conceded to its adversaries without surrendering the honours of its general character. It may be confessed with safety, as it must with truth, that the understandings of many are infallibly obscured and contracted, and their manners brutalised in a state of seclusion: that their passions are inflamed, their imaginations depraved, their tempers soured, and their whole character degraded and debased. It is useless, and it is needless, to deny that instead of being employed to obtain the advantages of quiet and leisure, to purify the desires and elevate the fancy, retirement has but too frequently been disgracefully occupied with images of sordid and criminal indulgence or with dreams of vain and frivolous amusement: and that its pure and peaceful retreats have been sullied with all the follies and depravities of the world. But this will serve only to demonstrate the infirm and corrupt nature of man; it ought by no means in the smallest degree to criminate or affect the character of Solitude.

“ SOLITUDE,” says KLOPSTOCK, “ presents in  
 “ one hand a cup of bliss, in the other grasps an  
 “ envenomed

“ envenomed dagger : the former she offers to the  
“ lips of the happy ; the latter she plants in the  
“ breast of the wretched.” But this, like all  
poetry, is fiction. Retirement is ever a compos-  
ing cordial to the unfortunate ; baneful only to  
the vicious or the weak ; but cheering as Nectar  
to the rational and virtuous.

THE benefits of Solitude and the advantages of  
Society may easily be reconciled and intermingled  
with each other : and, as circumstances forbid or  
favour, we may live in retirement, without becom-  
ing exiles from the world : or we may mingle freely  
and intimately with the world, without entirely  
estranging ourselves from occasional visits to a soli-  
tude in which we may not wish wholly to pass our  
lives. Such an alliance is, indeed, no less the  
general interest, than the general lot, of mankind :  
shut up wholly within ourselves, we may sacrifice our  
own happiness, disobey the injunctions of religion,  
and betray our duties to humanity. But it is per-  
haps, as improper to conclude that all the duties of  
life are neglected in Solitude, as that they are al-  
ways fulfilled in Society.

It is not a new discovery, that most of the charms,  
and all the benefits, of rural retirement may be en-  
joyed without removing from the vicinity of the  
capital. When PETRARCH dwelt among the  
pleasures and constraints of cities, he was accus-  
tomed

tomed to break from their formal restriction, and fly their gawdy fascinations, to rove at large in the most sequestered and savage scenes. He wandered among rocks and forests, there to woo the inspirations of the Muse, or solicit the illuminations of wisdom. In these romantic excursions his poetic transports were frequently awakened : There also his soul, not confined to trivial offices, or minute and punctilious duties, contemplated the extended maxims of policy and the great principles of philosophy. Having for a time fixed his residence in *Parma*, after his reputation had attracted public curiosity, and secured general respect to his person, the nobles of that city received him with attention most flattering, and besieged him with invitations; to join their parties, and partake their pleasures: **PETRARCH**, however, had formed to himself too rational a scheme of enjoyment to put much value on the notice of the great, or to expect much satisfaction from their society. A poet and a philosopher, he imagined, was as useless to their pleasures, as they were ineffectual to his entertainment. Often retiring therefore from their civilities, he sought the familiar and endeared solace of the woods. In the midst of the luxuries and splendour of the elegant *Parma*, so much did he thirst for the quiet and simple pleasures of retirement, that he chose a small mansion in an obscure quarter of the city; where, in study and reflection, he might escape

the fight and even sound of its noisy and riotous amusements. From this civic retreat, which stood in a garden watered by a small but pleasant rivulet, he thus writes to a friend, in expressions of the purest and fullest satisfaction : " So happily is my lodge situated that I enjoy all the charms of rural seclusion, yet retain within my reach all the advantages and pleasures of the town. If I grow weary of Solitude, I fall forth and indulge in the relaxations of Society : if I am disgusted or satiated with company, I fly to the sweet repose, the endearing and interesting occupations of Solitude. Oh ! may I for ever remain stationed in this happy neutrality of condition, where I enjoy a silent tranquillity mingled with convivial hilarity and social solace, unknown to the sages of Greece or the saints of the deserts. May none of the idle greatness or frivolous pleasures of the world interrupt the calm freedom of my happy retreat ! Let them continue to fill with vain exultation and puerile mirth the servile beings, who, attached to the splendid slavery of courtly magnificence, know not how to relish, or to value the pleasures offered by retired leisure to a mind free and rational."

THIS, indeed, is the plan most practically wise, most usefully and honourably virtuous ; by thus dividing ourselves between the active duties and

innocent amusements of public life, and the tranquil studies and enjoyments of sequestered leisure ; between the indulgence of personal delight and ease, and the improvement of the elegant and noble faculties ; we may shun the opposite dangers of acquiring a passion for light and frivolous dissipation, or, contracting a disposition to joyless and misanthropic severity.

MAY every one entertain the same confidence, and feel the same satisfaction, in the charms and virtues of Solitude as I have myself ever experienced, when the cares of life and the duties of my profession have allowed me to enjoy their pleasing influence ! And while the benefits of retirement always lie within the reach of those who deserve and desire them, never may the blessings of social intercourse, the consolations of friendship, the endearments of love be wanting to the heart, that is sensible to their worth, and aspires by virtuous efforts to their possession. May all such succeed in guarding themselves from the wants and cares of life, and in gaining leisure for its best enjoyments and its noblest duties : may they attach to themselves pleasing and faithful companions ; amiable, rational, and affectionate friends ; without losing their relish for the pleasures of rational seclusion.

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It is our duty no less to serve than to love all within the sphere of our action and affections; but we are not called upon to bow the neck with servile humility and submission to any, however exalted in place, or pre-eminent in merit. Let us retain the will and the power of occasionally withdrawing from Society, without desiring to desert or renounce it. We shall consult our own happiness and assert a manly dignity and resolution, by extracting from our commerce with the world whatever pleasure or instruction it contains; we shall discharge our just obligations to Society, by rendering to it every service which our faculties enable us to perform. But let us at the same time cultivate the habit of visiting the sanctuary of retirement; there in serious meditation to solicit the whispers of wisdom, and address with pious awe the spirit of goodness. By these means we shall purchase all the comforts and blessings of Society, without the expence of our virtue, peace, or independence: and thus shall we retain all the advantages of Seclusion without renouncing the salutary pleasures of the world, neglecting our social duties, or forfeiting the sentiments of humanity.

FINIS.





